

THE AUGUST 12TH, 2016 PUBLIC DOMAIN READER

ANTHOLOGY BY MATT PIERARD



Ceezanne

SPECIMEN JONES

from: The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Red Men and White*, by Owen Wister

Ephraim, the proprietor of Twenty Mile, had wasted his day in burying a man. He did not know the man. He had found him, or what the Apaches had left of him, sprawled among some charred sticks just outside the Cañon del Oro. It was a useful discovery in its way, for otherwise Ephraim might have gone on hunting his strayed horses near the cañon, and ended among charred sticks himself. Very likely the Indians were far away by this time, but he returned to Twenty Mile with the man tied to his saddle, and his pony nervously snorting. And now the day was done, and the man lay in the earth, and they had even built a fence round him; for the hole was pretty shallow, and coyotes have a way of smelling this sort of thing a long way off when they are hungry, and the man was not in a coffin. They were always short of coffins in Arizona.

Day was done at Twenty Mile, and the customary activity prevailed inside that flat-roofed cube of mud. Sounds of singing, shooting, dancing, and Mexican tunes on the concertina came out of the windows hand in hand, to widen and die among the hills. A limber, pretty boy, who might be nineteen, was dancing energetically, while a grave old gentleman, with tobacco running down his beard, pointed a pistol at the boy's heels, and shot a hole in the earth now and then to show that the weapon was really loaded. Everybody was quite used to all of this--excepting the boy. He was an Eastern new-comer, passing his first evening at a place of entertainment.

Night in and night out every guest at Twenty Mile was either happy and full of whiskey, or else his friends were making arrangements for his funeral. There was water at Twenty Mile--the only water for twoscore of miles. Consequently it was an important station on the road between the southern country and Old Camp Grant, and the new mines north of the Mescal Range. The stunt, liquor-perfumed adobe cabin lay on the gray floor of the desert like an isolated slab of chocolate. A corral, two desolate stable-sheds, and the slowly turning windmill were all else. Here Ephraim and one or two helpers abode, armed against Indians, and selling whiskey. Variety in their vocation of drinking and killing was brought them by the travellers. These passed and passed through the glaring vacant months--some days only one ragged fortune-hunter, riding a pony; again by twos and threes, with high-loaded burros; and sometimes they came in companies, walking beside their clanking freight-wagons. Some were young, and some were old, and all drank whiskey, and wore knives and guns to keep each other civil. Most of them were bound for the mines, and some of them sometimes returned. No man trusted the next man, and their names, when they had any, would be O'Rafferty, Angus, Schwartzmeyer, José Maria, and Smith. All stopped for one night; some longer, remaining drunk and profitable to Ephraim; now and then one stayed permanently, and had a fence built round him. Whoever came, and

whatever befell them, Twenty Mile was chronically hilarious after sundown--a dot of riot in the dumb Arizona night.

On this particular evening they had a tenderfoot. The boy, being new in Arizona, still trusted his neighbor. Such people turned up occasionally. This one had paid for everybody's drink several times, because he felt friendly, and never noticed that nobody ever paid for his. They had played cards with him, stolen his spurs, and now they were making him dance. It was an ancient pastime; yet two or three were glad to stand round and watch it, because it was some time since they had been to the opera. Now the tenderfoot had misunderstood these friends at the beginning, supposing himself to be among good fellows, and they therefore naturally set him down as a fool. But even while dancing you may learn much, and suddenly. The boy, besides being limber, had good tough black hair, and it was not in fear, but with a cold blue eye, that he looked at the old gentleman. The trouble had been that his own revolver had somehow hitched, so he could not pull it from the holster at the necessary moment.

"Tried to draw on me, did yer?" said the old gentleman. "Step higher! Step, now, or I'll crack open yer kneepans, ye robin's egg."

"Thinks he's having a bad time," remarked Ephraim. "Wonder how he'd like to have been that man the Injuns had sport with?"

"Weren't his ear funny?" said one who had helped bury the man.

"Ear?" said Ephraim. "You boys ought to been along when I found him, and seen the way they'd fixed up his mouth." Ephraim explained the details simply, and the listeners shivered. But Ephraim was a humorist. "Wonder how it feels," he continued, "to have--"

[Illustration: AN APACHE]

Here the boy sickened at his comments and the loud laughter. Yet a few hours earlier these same half-drunken jesters had laid the man to rest with decent humanity. The boy was taking his first dose of Arizona. By no means was everybody looking at his jig. They had seen tenderfeet so often. There was a Mexican game of cards; there was the concertina; and over in the corner sat Specimen Jones, with his back to the company, singing to himself. Nothing had been said or done that entertained him in the least. He had seen everything quite often.

"Higher! skip higher, you elegant calf," remarked the old gentleman to the tenderfoot. "High-ye!" And he placidly fired a fourth shot that scraped the boy's boot at the ankle and threw earth over the clock, so that you could not tell the minute from the hour hand.

"Drink to me only with thine eyes," sang Specimen Jones, softly. They

did not care much for his songs in Arizona. These lyrics were all, or nearly all, that he retained of the days when he was twenty, although he was but twenty-six now.

The boy was cutting pigeon-wings, the concertina played "Matamoras," Jones continued his lyric, when two Mexicans leaped at each other, and the concertina stopped with a quack.

"Quit it!" said Ephraim from behind the bar, covering the two with his weapon. "I don't want any greasers scrapping round here to-night. We've just got cleaned up."

It had been cards, but the Mexicans made peace, to the regret of Specimen Jones. He had looked round with some hopes of a crisis, and now for the first time he noticed the boy.

"Blamed if he ain't neat," he said. But interest faded from his eye, and he turned again to the wall. "'Lieb Vaterland magst ruhig sein,'" he melodiously observed. His repertory was wide and refined. When he sang he was always grammatical.

"Ye kin stop, kid," said the old gentleman, not unkindly, and he shoved his pistol into his belt.

The boy ceased. He had been thinking matters over. Being lithe and strong, he was not tired nor much out of breath, but he was trembling with the plan and the prospect he had laid out for himself. "Set 'em up," he said to Ephraim. "Set 'em up again all round."

His voice caused Specimen Jones to turn and look once more, while the old gentleman, still benevolent, said, "Yer langwidge means pleasanter than it sounds, kid." He glanced at the boy's holster, and knew he need not keep a very sharp watch as to that. Its owner had bungled over it once already. All the old gentleman did was to place himself next the boy on the off side from the holster; any move the tenderfoot's hand might make for it would be green and unskilful, and easily anticipated. The company lined up along the bar, and the bottle slid from glass to glass. The boy and his tormentor stood together in the middle of the line, and the tormentor, always with half a thought for the holster, handled his drink on the wet counter, waiting till all should be filled and ready to swallow simultaneously, as befits good manners.

"Well, my regards," he said, seeing the boy raise his glass; and as the old gentleman's arm lifted in unison, exposing his waist, the boy reached down a lightning hand, caught the old gentleman's own pistol, and jammed it in his face.

"Now you'll dance," said he.

"Whoop!" exclaimed Specimen Jones, delighted. "_Blamed_ if he ain't neat!" And Jones's handsome face lighted keenly.

"Hold on!" the boy sang out, for the amazed old gentleman was mechanically drinking his whiskey out of sheer fright. The rest had forgotten their drinks. "Not one swallow," the boy continued. "No, you'll not put it down either. You'll keep hold of it, and you'll dance all round this place. Around and around. And don't you spill any. And I'll be thinking what you'll do after that."

Specimen Jones eyed the boy with growing esteem. "Why, he ain't bigger than a pint of cider," said he.

"Prance away!" commanded the tenderfoot, and fired a shot between the old gentleman's not widely straddled legs.

"You hev the floor, Mr. Adams," Jones observed, respectfully, at the old gentleman's agile leap. "I'll let no man here interrupt you." So the capering began, and the company stood back to make room. "I've saw juicy things in this Territory," continued Specimen Jones, aloud, to himself, "but this combination fills my bill."

He shook his head sagely, following the black-haired boy with his eye. That youth was steering Mr. Adams round the room with the pistol, proud as a ring-master. Yet not altogether. He was only nineteen, and though his heart beat stoutly, it was beating alone in a strange country. He had come straight to this from hunting squirrels along the Susquehanna, with his mother keeping supper warm for him in the stone farm-house among the trees. He had read books in which hardy heroes saw life, and always triumphed with precision on the last page, but he remembered no receipt for this particular situation. Being good game American blood, he did not think now about the Susquehanna, but he did long with all his might to know what he ought to do next to prove himself a man. His buoyant rage, being glutted with the old gentleman's fervent skipping, had cooled, and a stress of reaction was falling hard on his brave young nerves. He imagined everybody against him. He had no notion that there was another American wanderer there, whose reserved and whimsical nature he had touched to the heart.

The fickle audience was with him, of course, for the moment, since he was upper dog and it was a good show; but one in that room was distinctly against him. The old gentleman was dancing with an ugly eye; he had glanced down to see just where his knife hung at his side, and he had made some calculations. He had fired four shots; the boy had fired one. "Four and one hez always made five," the old gentleman told himself with much secret pleasure, and pretended that he was going to stop his double-shuffle. It was an excellent trap, and the boy fell straight into it. He squandered his last precious bullet on the spittoon near which Mr. Adams happened to be at the moment, and the next moment Mr. Adams

had him by the throat. They swayed and gulped for breath, rutting the earth with sharp heels; they rolled to the floor and floundered with legs tight tangled, the boy blindly striking at Mr. Adams with the pistol-butt, and the audience drawing closer to lose nothing, when the bright knife flashed suddenly. It poised, and flew across the room, harmless, for a foot had driven into Mr. Adams's arm, and he felt a cold ring grooving his temple. It was the smooth, chilly muzzle of Specimen Jones's six-shooter.

"That's enough," said Jones. "More than enough."

Mr. Adams, being mature in judgment, rose instantly, like a good old sheep, and put his knife back obedient to orders. But in the brain of the over-strained, bewildered boy universal destruction was whirling. With a face stricken lean with ferocity, he staggered to his feet, plucking at his obstinate holster, and glaring for a foe. His eye fell first on his deliverer, leaning easily against the bar watching him, while the more and more curious audience scattered, and held themselves ready to murder the boy if he should point his pistol their way. He was dragging at it clumsily, and at last it came. Specimen Jones sprang like a cat, and held the barrel vertical and gripped the boy's wrist.

"Go easy, son," said he. "I know how you're feelin'."

The boy had been wrenching to get a shot at Jones, and now the quietness of the man's voice reached his brain, and he looked at Specimen Jones. He felt a potent brotherhood in the eyes that were considering him, and he began to fear he had been a fool. There was his dwarf Eastern revolver, slack in his inefficient fist, and the singular person still holding its barrel and tapping one derisive finger over the end, careless of the risk to his first joint.

"Why, you little ---- ----," said Specimen Jones, caressingly, to the hypnotized youth, "if you was to pop that squirt off at me, I'd turn you up and spank y'u. Set 'em up, Ephraim."

But the commercial Ephraim hesitated, and Jones remembered. His last cent was gone. It was his third day at Ephraim's. He had stopped, having a little money, on his way to Tucson, where a friend had a job for him, and was waiting. He was far too experienced a character ever to sell his horse or his saddle on these occasions, and go on drinking. He looked as if he might, but he never did; and this was what disappointed business men like Ephraim in Specimen Jones.

But now, here was this tenderfoot he had undertaken to see through, and Ephraim reminding him that he had no more of the wherewithal. "Why, so I haven't," he said, with a short laugh, and his face flushed. "I guess," he continued, hastily, "this is worth a dollar or two." He drew a chain up from below his flannel shirt-collar and over his head. He drew it a

little slowly. It had not been taken off for a number of years--not, indeed, since it had been placed there originally. "It ain't brass," he added, lightly, and strewed it along the counter without looking at it. Ephraim did look at it, and, being satisfied, began to uncork a new bottle, while the punctual audience came up for its drink.

"Won't you please let me treat?" said the boy, unsteadily. "I ain't likely to meet you again, sir." Reaction was giving him trouble inside.

"Where are you bound, kid?"

"Oh, just a ways up the country," answered the boy, keeping a grip on his voice.

"Well, you _may_ get there. Where did you pick up that--that thing? Your pistol, I mean."

"It's a present from a friend," replied the tenderfoot, with dignity.

"Farewell gift, wasn't it, kid? Yes; I thought so. Now I'd hate to get an affair like that from a friend. It would start me wondering if he liked me as well as I'd always thought he did. Put up that money, kid. You're drinking with me. Say, what's yer name?"

"Cumnor--J. Cumnor."

"Well, J. Cumnor, I'm glad to know y'u. Ephraim, let me make you acquainted with Mr. Cumnor. Mr. Adams, if you're rested from your quadrille, you can shake hands with my friend. Step around, you Miguels and Serapios and Cristobals, whatever y'u claim your names are. This is Mr. J. Cumnor."

The Mexicans did not understand either the letter or the spirit of these American words, but they drank their drink, and the concertina resumed its acrid melody. The boy had taken himself off without being noticed.

"Say, Spec," said Ephraim to Jones, "I'm no hog. Here's yer chain. You'll be along again."

"Keep it till I'm along again," said the owner.

"Just as you say, Spec," answered Ephraim, smoothly, and he hung the pledge over an advertisement chromo of a nude cream-colored lady with bright straw hair holding out a bottle of somebody's champagne. Specimen Jones sang no more songs, but smoked, and leaned in silence on the bar. The company were talking of bed, and Ephraim plunged his glasses into a bucket to clean them for the morrow.

"Know anything about that kid?" inquired Jones, abruptly.

Ephraim shook his head as he washed.

"Travelling alone, ain't he?"

Ephraim nodded.

"Where did y'u say y'u found that fellow layin' the Injuns got?"

"Mile this side the cañon. 'Mong them sand-humps."

"How long had he been there, do y'u figure?"

"Three days, anyway."

Jones watched Ephraim finish his cleansing. "Your clock needs wiping," he remarked. "A man might suppose it was nine, to see that thing the way the dirt hides the hands. Look again in half an hour and it'll say three. That's the kind of clock gives a man the jams. Sends him crazy."

"Well, that ain't a bad thing to be in this country," said Ephraim, rubbing the glass case and restoring identity to the hands. "If that man had been crazy he'd been livin' right now. Injuns'll never touch lunatics."

"That band have passed here and gone north," Jones said. "I saw a smoke among the foot-hills as I come along day before yesterday. I guess they're aiming to cross the Santa Catalina. Most likely they're that band from round the San Carlos that were reported as raiding down in Sonora."

"I seen well enough," said Ephraim, "when I found him that they wasn't going to trouble us any, or they'd have been around by then."

He was quite right, but Specimen Jones was thinking of something else. He went out to the corral, feeling disturbed and doubtful. He saw the tall white freight-wagon of the Mexicans, looming and silent, and a little way off the new fence where the man lay. An odd sound startled him, though he knew it was no Indians at this hour, and he looked down into a little dry ditch. It was the boy, hidden away flat on his stomach among the stones, sobbing.

"Oh, snakes!" whispered Specimen Jones, and stepped back. The Latin races embrace and weep, and all goes well; but among Saxons tears are a horrid event. Jones never knew what to do when it was a woman, but this was truly disgusting. He was well seasoned by the frontier, had tried a little of everything: town and country, ranches, saloons, stage-driving, marriage occasionally, and latterly mines. He had sundry claims staked out, and always carried pieces of stone in his pockets, discoursing upon

their mineral-bearing capacity, which was apt to be very slight. That is why he was called Specimen Jones. He had exhausted all the important sensations, and did not care much for anything any more. Perfect health and strength kept him from discovering that he was a saddened, drifting man. He wished to kick the boy for his baby performance, and yet he stepped carefully away from the ditch so the boy should not suspect his presence. He found himself standing still, looking at the dim, broken desert.

"Why, hell," complained Specimen Jones, "he played the little man to start with. He did so. He scared that old horse-thief, Adams, just about dead. Then he went to kill me, that kep' him from bein' buried early to-morrow. I've been wild that way myself, and wantin' to shoot up the whole outfit." Jones looked at the place where his middle finger used to be, before a certain evening in Tombstone. "But I never--" He glanced towards the ditch, perplexed. "What's that mean? Why in the world does he git to cryin' for _now_, do you suppose?" Jones took to singing without knowing it. "'Ye shepherds, tell me, ha-ve you seen my Flora pass this way?'" he murmured. Then a thought struck him. "Hello, kid!" he called out. There was no answer. "Of course," said Jones. "Now he's ashamed to hev me see him come out of there." He walked with elaborate slowness round the corral and behind a shed. "Hello, you kid!" he called again.

"I was thinking of going to sleep," said the boy, appearing quite suddenly. "I--I'm not used to riding all day. I'll get used to it, you know," he hastened to add.

"Ha-ve you seen my Flo'--Say, kid, where y'u bound, anyway?"

"San Carlos."

"San Carlos? Oh. Ah. 'Flora pass this way?'"

"Is it far, sir?"

"Awful far, sometimes. It's always liable to be far through the Arivaypa Cañon."

"I didn't expect to make it between meals," remarked Cumnor.

"No. Sure. What made you come this route?"

"A man told me."

"A man? Oh. Well, it is kind o' difficult, I admit, for an Arizonan not to lie to a stranger. But I think I'd have told you to go by Tres Alamos and Point of Mountain. It's the road the man that told you would choose himself every time. Do you like Injuns, kid?"

Cumnor snapped eagerly.

"Of course y'u do. And you've never saw one in the whole minute-and-a-half you've been alive. I know all about it."

"I'm not afraid," said the boy.

"Not afraid? Of course y'u ain't. What's your idea in going to Carlos? Got town lots there?"

"No," said the literal youth, to the huge internal diversion of Jones. "There's a man there I used to know back home. He's in the cavalry. What sort of a town is it for sport?" asked Cumnor, in a gay Lothario tone.

"_Town_?" Specimen Jones caught hold of the top rail of the corral. "_Sport?"_ Now I'll tell y'u what sort of a town it is. There ain't no streets. There ain't no houses. There ain't any land and water in the usual meaning of them words. There's Mount Turnbull. It's pretty near a usual mountain, but y'u don't want to go there. The Creator didn't make San Carlos. It's a heap older than Him. When He got around to it after slickin' up Paradise and them fruit-trees, He just left it to be as He found it, as a sample of the way they done business before He come along. He 'ain't done any work around that spot at all, He 'ain't. Mix up a barrel of sand and ashes and thorns, and jam scorpions and rattlesnakes along in, and dump the outfit on stones, and heat yer stones red-hot, and set the United States army loose over the place chasin' Apaches, and you've got San Carlos."

Cumnor was silent for a moment. "I don't care," he said. "I want to chase Apaches."

"Did you see that man Ephraim found by the cañon?" Jones inquired.

"Didn't get here in time."

"Well, there was a hole in his chest made by an arrow. But there's no harm in that if you die at wunst. That chap didn't, y'u see. You heard Ephraim tell about it. They'd done a number of things to the man before he could die. Roastin' was only one of 'em. Now your road takes you through the mountains where these Injuns hev gone. Kid, come along to Tucson with me," urged Jones, suddenly.

Again Cumnor was silent. "Is my road different from other people's?" he said, finally.

"Not to Grant, it ain't. These Mexicans are hauling freight to Grant. But what's the matter with your coming to Tucson with me?"

"I started to go to San Carlos, and I'm going," said Cumnor.

"You're a poor chuckle-headed fool!" burst out Jones, in a rage. "And y'u can go, for all I care--you and your Christmas-tree pistol. Like as not you won't find your cavalry friend at San Carlos. They've killed a lot of them soldiers huntin' Injuns this season. Good-night."

Specimen Jones was gone. Cumnor walked to his blanket-roll, where his saddle was slung under the shed. The various doings of the evening had bruised his nerves. He spread his blankets among the dry cattle-dung, and sat down, taking off a few clothes slowly. He lumped his coat and overalls under his head for a pillow, and, putting the despised pistol alongside, lay between the blankets. No object showed in the night but the tall freight-wagon. The tenderfoot thought he had made altogether a fool of himself upon the first trial trip of his manhood, alone on the open sea of Arizona. No man, not even Jones now, was his friend. A stranger, who could have had nothing against him but his inexperience, had taken the trouble to direct him on the wrong road. He did not mind definite enemies. He had punched the heads of those in Pennsylvania, and would not object to shooting them here; but this impersonal, surrounding hostility of the unknown was new and bitter: the cruel, assassinating, cowardly Southwest, where prospered those jail-birds whom the vigilantes had driven from California. He thought of the nameless human carcass that lay near, buried that day, and of the jokes about its mutilations. Cumnor was not an innocent boy, either in principles or in practice, but this laughter about a dead body had burned into his young, unhardened soul. He lay watching with hot, dogged eyes the brilliant stars. A passing wind turned the windmill, which creaked a forlorn minute, and ceased. He must have gone to sleep and slept soundly, for the next he knew it was the cold air of dawn that made him open his eyes. A numb silence lay over all things, and the tenderfoot had that moment of curiosity as to where he was now which comes to those who have journeyed for many days. The Mexicans had already departed with their freight-wagon. It was not entirely light, and the embers where these early starters had cooked their breakfast lay glowing in the sand across the road. The boy remembered seeing a wagon where now he saw only chill, distant peaks, and while he lay quiet and warm, shunning full consciousness, there was a stir in the cabin, and at Ephraim's voice reality broke upon his drowsiness, and he recollected Arizona and the keen stress of shifting for himself. He noted the gray paling round the grave. Indians? He would catch up with the Mexicans, and travel in their company to Grant. Freighters made but fifteen miles in the day, and he could start after breakfast and be with them before they stopped to noon. Six men need not worry about Apaches, Cumnor thought. The voice of Specimen Jones came from the cabin, and sounds of lighting the stove, and the growling conversation of men getting up. Cumnor, lying in his blankets, tried to overhear what Jones was saying, for no better reason than that this was the only man he had met lately who had seemed to care

whether he were alive or dead. There was the clink of Ephraim's whiskey-bottles, and the cheerful tones of old Mr. Adams, saying, "It's better 'n brushin' yer teeth"; and then further clinking, and an inquiry from Specimen Jones.

"Whose spurs?" said he.

"Mine." This from Mr. Adams.

"How long have they been yourn?"

"Since I got 'em, I guess."

"Well, you've enjoyed them spurs long enough." The voice of Specimen Jones now altered in quality. "And you'll give 'em back to that kid."

Muttering followed that the boy could not catch. "You'll give 'em back," repeated Jones. "I seen y'u lift 'em from under that chair when I was in the corner."

"That's straight, Mr. Adams," said Ephraim. "I noticed it myself, though I had no objections, of course. But Mr. Jones has pointed out--"

"Since when have you growed so honest, Jones?" cackled Mr. Adams, seeing that he must lose his little booty. "And why didn't you raise yer objections when you seen me do it?"

"I didn't know the kid," Jones explained. "And if it don't strike you that game blood deserves respect, why it does strike me."

[Illustration: CUMNOR'S AWAKENING]

Hearing this, the tenderfoot, outside in his shed, thought better of mankind and life in general, arose from his nest, and began preening himself. He had all the correct trappings for the frontier, and his toilet in the shed gave him pleasure. The sun came up, and with a stroke struck the world to crystal. The near sand-hills went into rose, the crabbed yucca and the mesquite turned transparent, with lances and pale films of green, like drapery graciously veiling the desert's face, and distant violet peaks and edges framed the vast enchantment beneath the liquid exhalations of the sky. The smell of bacon and coffee from open windows filled the heart with bravery and yearning, and Ephraim, putting his head round the corner, called to Cumnor that he had better come in and eat. Jones, already at table, gave him the briefest nod; but the spurs were there, replaced as Cumnor had left them under a chair in the corner. In Arizona they do not say much at any meal, and at breakfast nothing at all; and as Cumnor swallowed and meditated, he noticed the cream-colored lady and the chain, and he made up his mind he should assert his identity with

regard to that business, though how and when was not clear to him. He was in no great haste to take up his journey. The society of the Mexicans whom he must sooner or later overtake did not tempt him. When breakfast was done he idled in the cabin, like the other guests, while Ephraim and his assistant busied about the premises. But the morning grew on, and the guests, after a season of smoking and tilted silence against the wall, shook themselves and their effects together, saddled, and were lost among the waste thorny hills. Twenty Mile became hot and torpid. Jones lay on three consecutive chairs, occasionally singing, and old Mr. Adams had not gone away either, but watched him, with more tobacco running down his beard.

"Well," said Cumnor, "I'll be going."

"Nobody's stopping y'u," remarked Jones.

"You're going to Tucson?" the boy said, with the chain problem still unsolved in his mind. "Good-bye, Mr. Jones. I hope I'll--we'll--"

"That'll do," said Jones; and the tenderfoot, thrown back by this severity, went to get his saddle-horse and his burro.

Presently Jones remarked to Mr. Adams that he wondered what Ephraim was doing, and went out. The old gentleman was left alone in the room, and he swiftly noticed that the belt and pistol of Specimen Jones were left alone with him. The accoutrement lay by the chair its owner had been lounging in. It is an easy thing to remove cartridges from the chambers of a revolver, and replace the weapon in its holster so that everything looks quite natural. The old gentleman was entertained with the notion that somewhere in Tucson Specimen Jones might have a surprise, and he did not take a minute to prepare this, drop the belt as it lay before, and saunter innocently out of the saloon. Ephraim and Jones were criticising the tenderfoot's property as he packed his burro.

"Do y'u make it a rule to travel with ice-cream?" Jones was inquiring.

"They're for water," Cumnor said. "They told me at Tucson I'd need to carry water for three days on some trails."

It was two good-sized milk-cans that he had, and they bounced about on the little burro's pack, giving him as much amazement as a jackass can feel. Jones and Ephraim were hilarious.

"Don't go without your spurs, Mr. Cumnor," said the voice of old Mr. Adams, as he approached the group. His tone was particularly civil.

The tenderfoot had, indeed, forgotten his spurs, and he ran back to get them. The cream-colored lady still had the chain hanging upon her, and Cumnor's problem was suddenly solved. He put the chain in his pocket,

and laid the price of one round of drinks for last night's company on the shelf below the chromo. He returned with his spurs on, and went to his saddle that lay beside that of Specimen Jones under the shed. After a moment he came with his saddle to where the men stood talking by his pony, slung it on, and tightened the cinches; but the chain was now in the saddle-bag of Specimen Jones, mixed up with some tobacco, stale bread, a box of matches, and a hunk of fat bacon. The men at Twenty Mile said good-day to the tenderfoot, with monosyllables and indifference, and watched him depart into the heated desert. Wishing for a last look at Jones, he turned once, and saw the three standing, and the chocolate brick of the cabin, and the windmill white and idle in the sun.

"He'll be gutted by night," remarked Mr. Adams.

"I ain't buryin' him, then," said Ephraim.

"Nor I," said Specimen Jones. "Well, it's time I was getting to Tucson."

He went to the saloon, strapped on his pistol, saddled, and rode away. Ephraim and Mr. Adams returned to the cabin; and here is the final conclusion they came to after three hours of discussion as to who took the chain and who had it just then:

Ephraim. Jones, he hadn't no cash.

Mr. Adams. The kid, he hadn't no sense.

Ephraim. The kid, he lent the cash to Jones.

Mr. Adams. Jones, he goes off with his chain.

Both. What damn fools everybody is, anyway!

And they went to dinner. But Mr. Adams did not mention his relations with Jones's pistol. Let it be said, in extenuation of that performance, that Mr. Adams supposed Jones was going to Tucson, where he said he was going, and where a job and a salary were awaiting him. In Tucson an unloaded pistol in the holster of so handy a man on the drop as was Specimen would keep people civil, because they would not know, any more than the owner, that it was unloaded; and the mere possession of it would be sufficient in nine chances out of ten--though it was undoubtedly for the tenth that Mr. Adams had a sneaking hope. But Specimen Jones was not going to Tucson. A contention in his mind as to whether he would do what was good for himself, or what was good for another, had kept him sullen ever since he got up. Now it was settled, and Jones in serene humor again. Of course he had started on the Tucson road, for the benefit of Ephraim and Mr. Adams.

The tenderfoot rode along. The Arizona sun beat down upon the deadly

silence, and the world was no longer of crystal, but a mesa, dull and gray and hot. The pony's hoofs grated in the gravel, and after a time the road dived down and up among lumpy hills of stone and cactus, always nearer the fierce glaring Sierra Santa Catalina. It dipped so abruptly in and out of the shallow sudden ravines that, on coming up from one of these into sight of the country again, the tenderfoot's heart jumped at the close apparition of another rider quickly bearing in upon him from gullies where he had been moving unseen. But it was only Specimen Jones.

"Hello!" said he, joining Cumnor. "Hot, ain't it?"

"Where are you going?" inquired Cumnor.

"Up here a ways." And Jones jerked his finger generally towards the Sierra, where they were heading.

"Thought you had a job in Tucson."

"That's what I have."

Specimen Jones had no more to say, and they rode for a while, their ponies' hoofs always grating in the gravel, and the milk-cans lightly clanking on the burro's pack. The bunched blades of the yuccas bristled steel-stiff, and as far as you could see it was a gray waste of mounds and ridges sharp and blunt, up to the forbidding boundary walls of the Tortilita one way and the Santa Catalina the other. Cumnor wondered if Jones had found the chain. Jones was capable of not finding it for several weeks, or of finding it at once and saying nothing.

"You'll excuse my meddling with your business?" the boy hazarded.

Jones looked inquiring.

"Something's wrong with your saddle-pocket."

Specimen saw nothing apparently wrong with it, but perceiving Cumnor was grinning, unbuckled the pouch. He looked at the boy rapidly, and looked away again, and as he rode, still in silence, he put the chain back round his neck below the flannel shirt-collar.

"Say, kid," he remarked, after some time, "what does J stand for?"

"J? Oh, my name! Jock."

"Well, Jock, will y'u explain to me as a friend how y'u ever come to be such a fool as to leave yer home--wherever and whatever it was--in exchange for this here God-forsaken and iniquitous hole?"

"If you'll explain to me," said the boy, greatly heartened, "how you

come to be ridin' in the company of a fool, instead of goin' to your job at Tucson."

The explanation was furnished before Specimen Jones had framed his reply. A burning freight-wagon and five dismembered human stumps lay in the road. This was what had happened to the Miguels and Serapios and the concertina. Jones and Cumnor, in their dodging and struggles to exclude all expressions of growing mutual esteem from their speech, had forgotten their journey, and a sudden bend among the rocks where the road had now brought them revealed the blood and fire staring them in the face. The plundered wagon was three parts empty; its splintered, blazing boards slid down as they burned into the fiery heap on the ground; packages of soda and groceries and medicines slid with them, bursting into chemical spots of green and crimson flame; a wheel crushed in and sank, spilling more packages that flickered and hissed; the garbage of combat and murder littered the earth, and in the air hung an odor that Cumnor knew, though he had never smelled it before. Morsels of dropped booty up among the rocks showed where the Indians had gone, and one horse remained, groaning, with an accidental arrow in his belly.

"We'll just kill him," said Jones; and his pistol snapped idly, and snapped again, as his eye caught a motion--a something--two hundred yards up among the boulders on the hill. He whirled round. The enemy was behind them also. There was no retreat. "Yourn's no good!" yelled Jones, fiercely, for Cumnor was getting out his little, foolish revolver. "Oh, what a trick to play on a man! Drop off yer horse, kid; drop, and do like me. Shootin's no good here, even if I was loaded. _They_ shot, and look at them now. God bless them ice-cream freezers of yourn, kid! Did y'u ever see a crazy man? If you 'ain't, _make it up as y'u go along_!"

More objects moved up among the boulders. Specimen Jones ripped off the burro's pack, and the milk-cans rolled on the ground. The burro began grazing quietly, with now and then a step towards new patches of grass. The horses stood where their riders had left them, their reins over their heads, hanging and dragging. From two hundred yards on the hill the ambushed Apaches showed, their dark, scattered figures appearing cautiously one by one, watching with suspicion. Specimen Jones seized up one milk-can, and Cumnor obediently did the same.

"You kin dance, kid, and I kin sing, and we'll go to it," said Jones. He rambled in a wavering loop, and diving eccentrically at Cumnor, clashed the milk-cans together. "'Es schallt ein Ruf wie Donnerhall,'" he bawled, beginning the song of "Die Wacht am Rhein." "Why don't you dance?" he shouted, sternly. The boy saw the terrible earnestness of his face, and, clashing his milk-cans in turn, he shuffled a sort of jig. The two went over the sand in loops, toe and heel; the donkey continued his quiet grazing, and the flames rose hot and yellow from the freight-wagon. And all the while the stately German hymn pealed among the rocks, and the Apaches crept down nearer the bowing, scraping men.

The sun shone bright, and their bodies poured with sweat. Jones flung off his shirt; his damp, matted hair was half in ridges and half glued to his forehead, and the delicate gold chain swung and struck his broad, naked breast. The Apaches drew nearer again, their bows and arrows held uncertainly. They came down the hill, fifteen or twenty, taking a long time, and stopping every few yards. The milk-cans clashed, and Jones thought he felt the boy's strokes weakening. "Die Wacht am Rhein" was finished, and now it was "'Ha-ve you seen my Flora pass this way?'" "Y'u mustn't play out, kid," said Jones, very gently. "Indeed y'u mustn't;" and he at once resumed his song. The silent Apaches had now reached the bottom of the hill. They stood some twenty yards away, and Cumnor had a good chance to see his first Indians. He saw them move, and the color and slim shape of their bodies, their thin arms, and their long, black hair. It went through his mind that if he had no more clothes on than that, dancing would come easier. His boots were growing heavy to lift, and his overalls seemed to wrap his sinews in wet, strangling thongs. He wondered how long he had been keeping this up. The legs of the Apaches were free, with light moccasins only half-way to the thigh, slenderly held up by strings from the waist. Cumnor envied their unencumbered steps as he saw them again walk nearer to where he was dancing. It was long since he had eaten, and he noticed a singing dulness in his brain, and became frightened at his thoughts, which were running and melting into one fixed idea. This idea was to take off his boots, and offer to trade them for a pair of moccasins. It terrified him--this endless, molten rush of thoughts; he could see them coming in different shapes from different places in his head, but they all joined immediately, and always formed the same fixed idea. He ground his teeth to master this encroaching inebriation of his will and judgment. He clashed his can more loudly to wake him to reality, which he still could recognize and appreciate. For a time he found it a good plan to listen to what Specimen Jones was singing, and tell himself the name of the song, if he knew it. At present it was "Yankee Doodle," to which Jones was fitting words of his own. These ran, "Now I'm going to try a bluff. And mind you do what I do"; and then again, over and over. Cumnor waited for the word "bluff"; for it was hard and heavy, and fell into his thoughts, and stopped them for a moment. The dance was so long now he had forgotten about that. A numbness had been spreading through his legs, and he was glad to feel a sharp pain in the sole of his foot. It was a piece of gravel that had somehow worked its way in, and was rubbing through the skin into the flesh. "That's good," he said, aloud. The pebble was eating the numbness away, and Cumnor drove it hard against the raw spot, and relished the tonic of its burning friction. The Apaches had drawn into a circle. Standing at some interval apart, they entirely surrounded the arena. Shrewd, half convinced, and yet with awe, they watched the dancers, who clashed their cans slowly now in rhythm to Jones's hoarse, parched singing. He was quite master of himself, and led the jig round the still blazing wreck of the wagon, and circled in figures of eight between the corpses of the Mexicans, clashing the milk-cans above each one. Then, knowing his strength was

coming to an end, he approached an Indian whose splendid fillet and trappings denoted him of consequence; and Jones was near shouting with relief when the Indian shrank backward. Suddenly he saw Cumnor let his can drop, and without stopping to see why, he caught it up, and, slowly rattling both, approached each Indian in turn with tortuous steps. The circle that had never uttered a sound till now receded, chanting almost in a whisper some exorcising song which the man with the fillet had begun. They gathered round him, retreating always, and the strain, with its rapid muttered words, rose and fell softly among them. Jones had supposed the boy was overcome by faintness, and looked to see where he lay. But it was not faintness. Cumnor, with his boots off, came by and walked after the Indians in a trance. They saw him, and quickened their pace, often turning to be sure he was not overtaking them. He called to them unintelligibly, stumbling up the sharp hill, and pointing to the boots. Finally he sat down. They continued ascending the mountain, herding close round the man with the feathers, until the rocks and the filmy tangles screened them from sight; and like a wind that hums uncertainly in grass, their chanting died away.

The sun was half behind the western range when Jones next moved. He called, and, getting no answer, he crawled painfully to where the boy lay on the hill. Cumnor was sleeping heavily; his head was hot, and he moaned. So Jones crawled down, and fetched blankets and the canteen of water. He spread the blankets over the boy, wet a handkerchief and laid it on his forehead; then he lay down himself.

The earth was again magically smitten to crystal. Again the sharp cactus and the sand turned beautiful, and violet floated among the mountains, and rose-colored orange in the sky above them.

"Jock," said Specimen at length.

The boy opened his eyes.

"Your foot is awful, Jock. Can y'u eat?"

"Not with my foot."

"Ah, God bless y'u, Jock! Y'u ain't turruble sick. But _can_ y'u eat?"

Cumnor shook his head.

"Eatin's what y'u need, though. Well, here." Specimen poured a judicious mixture of whiskey and water down the boy's throat, and wrapped the awful foot in his own flannel shirt. "They'll fix y'u over to Grant. It's maybe twelve miles through the cañon. It ain't a town any more than Carlos is, but the soldiers'll be good to us. As soon as night comes you and me must somehow git out of this."

Somehow they did, Jones walking and leading his horse and the imperturbable little burro, and also holding Cumnor in the saddle. And when Cumnor was getting well in the military hospital at Grant, he listened to Jones recounting to all that chose to hear how useful a weapon an ice-cream freezer can be, and how if you'll only chase Apaches in your stocking feet they are sure to run away. And then Jones and Cumnor both enlisted; and I suppose Jones's friend is still expecting him in Tucson.

THE DESERTED FARM-HOUSE[36]

from: The Project Gutenberg EBook of The Poems of Philip Freneau, Volume I

This antique dome the insatiate tooth of time
Now level with the dust has almost laid;--
Yet ere 'tis gone, I seize my humble theme
From these low ruins, that his years have made.

Behold the unsocial hearth!--where once the fires
Blazed high, and soothed the storm-stay'd traveller's woes;
See! the weak roof, that abler props requires,
Admits the winds, and swift descending snows.

Here, to forget the labours of the day,
No more the swains at evening hours repair,
But wandering flocks assume the well known way
To shun the rigours of the midnight air.

In yonder chamber, half to ruin gone,
Once stood the ancient housewife's curtained bed--
Timely the prudent matron has withdrawn,
And each domestic comfort with her fled.

The trees, the flowers that her own hands had reared,
The plants, the vines, that were so verdant seen,--
The trees, the flowers, the vines have disappear'd,
And every plant has vanish'd from the green.

So sits in tears on wide Campania's plain
Rome, once the mistress of a world enslaved;
That triumph'd o'er the land, subdued the main,
And Time himself, in her wild transports, braved.

So sits in tears on Palestina's shore
The Hebrew town, of splendour once divine--
Her kings, her lords, her triumphs are no more;
Slain are her priests, and ruin'd every shrine.

Once, in the bounds of this deserted room,
Perhaps some swain nocturnal courtship made,
Perhaps some Sherlock mused amidst the gloom;
Since Love and Death forever seek the shade.

Perhaps some miser, doom'd to discontent,
Here counted o'er the heaps acquired with pain;
He to the dust--his gold, on traffick sent,
Shall ne'er disgrace these mouldering walls again.

Nor shall the glow-worm fopling, sunshine bred,
Seek, at the evening hour this wonted dome--
Time has reduced the fabrick to a shed,
Scarce fit to be the wandering beggar's home.

And none but I its dismal case lament--
None, none but I o'er its cold relics mourn,
Sent by the muse--(the time perhaps misspent)--
To write dull stanzas on this dome forlorn.

[36] The first trace that I can find of this poem is in the Freeman's Journal of May 18, 1785. I have little doubt that it is the "Stanzas on an Ancient Dutch House on Long Island," mentioned in 1773 in a letter to Madison as forming a part of Freneau's publication, "The American Village," now lost. After its appearance in the Freeman's Journal, it was widely copied. The Independent Gazetteer printed it in 1787, introduced as follows: "The following is copied from Perryman's London Morning Herald of July 22, 1787: 'The Deserted Farm House,' written in America by Mr. Freneau, whose political productions tended considerably to keep alive the spirit of independence during the late civil war." I have followed the text of 1809. The poet constantly emended this poem; he seldom reprinted it without minor changes, usually for the better.

Orphans of the Void

By MICHAEL SHAARA

[Transcriber's Note: This etext was produced from
Galaxy Science Fiction June 1952.
Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that
the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed.]

Finding a cause worth dying for is no great
trick--the Universe is full of them. Finding
one worth living for is the genuine problem!

In the region of the Coal Sack Nebula, on the dead fourth planet of
a star called Tyban, Captain Steffens of the Mapping Command stood
counting buildings. Eleven. No, twelve. He wondered if there was any
significance in the number. He had no idea.

"What do you make of it?" he asked.

Lieutenant Ball, the executive officer of the ship, almost tried to
scratch his head before he remembered that he was wearing a spacesuit.

"Looks like a temporary camp," Ball said. "Very few buildings, and all
built out of native materials, the only stuff available. Castaways,
maybe?"

Steffens was silent as he walked up onto the rise. The flat weathered
stone jutted out of the sand before him.

"No inscriptions," he pointed out.

"They would have been worn away. See the wind grooves? Anyway, there's
not another building on the whole damn planet. You wouldn't call it
much of a civilization."

"You don't think these are native?"

Ball said he didn't. Steffens nodded.

Standing there and gazing at the stone, Steffens felt the awe of great
age. He had a hunch, deep and intuitive, that this was old--_too_ old.
He reached out a gloved hand, ran it gently over the smooth stone

ridges of the wall. Although the atmosphere was very thin, he noticed that the buildings had no airlocks.

Ball's voice sounded in his helmet: "Want to set up shop, Skipper?"

Steffens paused. "All right, if you think it will do any good."

"You never can tell. Excavation probably won't be much use. These things are on a raised rock foundation, swept clean by the wind. And you can see that the rock itself is native--" he indicated the ledge beneath their feet--"and was cut out a long while back."

"How long?"

Ball toed the sand uncomfortably. "I wouldn't like to say off-hand."

"Make a rough estimate."

Ball looked at the captain, knowing what was in his mind. He smiled wryly and said: "Five thousand years? Ten thousand? I don't know."

Steffens whistled.

Ball pointed again at the wall. "Look at the striations. You can tell from that alone. It would take even a brisk Earth wind _at least_ several thousand years to cut that deep, and the wind here has only a fraction of that force."

The two men stood for a long moment in silence. Man had been in interstellar space for three hundred years and this was the first uncovered evidence of an advanced, space-crossing, alien race. It was an historic moment, but neither of them was thinking about history.

Man had been in space for only three hundred years. Whatever had built these had been in space for thousands of years.

Which ought to give _them_, thought Steffens uncomfortably, one hell of a good head-start.

* * * * *

While the excav crew worked steadily, turning up nothing, Steffens remained alone among the buildings. Ball came out to him, looked dryly at the walls.

"Well," he said, "whoever they were, we haven't heard from them since."

"No? How can you be sure?" Steffens grunted. "A space-borne race was roaming this part of the Galaxy while men were still pitching spears

at each other, _that_ long ago. And this planet is only a parsec from Varius II, a civilization as old as Earth's. Did whoever built these get to Varius? Or did they get to Earth? How can you know?"

He kicked at the sand distractedly. "And most important, where are they now? A race with several thousand years...."

"Fifteen thousand," Ball said. When Steffens looked up, he added: "That's what the geology boys say. Fifteen thousand, at the least."

Steffens turned to stare unhappily at the buildings. When he realized now how really old they were, a sudden thought struck him.

"But why buildings? Why did they have to build in stone, to last? There's something wrong with that. They shouldn't have had a need to build, unless they were castaways. And castaways would have left _something_ behind. The only reason they would need a camp would be--"

"If the ship left and some of them stayed."

Steffens nodded. "But then the ship must have come back. Where did it go?" He ceased kicking at the sand and looked up into the blue-black midday sky. "We'll never know."

"How about the other planets?" Ball asked.

"The report was negative. Inner too hot, outer too heavy and cold. The third planet is the only one with a decent temperature range, but _it_ has a CO₂ atmosphere."

"How about moons?"

Steffens shrugged. "We could try them and find out."

* * * * *

The third planet was a blank, gleaming ball until they were in close, and then the blankness resolved into folds and piling clouds and dimly, in places, the surface showed through. The ship went down through the clouds, falling the last few miles on her brakers. They came into the misty gas below, leveled off and moved along the edge of the twilight zone.

The moons of this solar system had yielded nothing. The third planet, a hot, heavy world which had no free oxygen and from which the monitors had detected nothing, was all that was left. Steffens expected nothing, but he had to try.

At a height of several miles, the ship moved up the zone, scanning,

moving in the familiar slow spiral of the Mapping Command. Faint dark outlines of bare rocks and hills moved by below.

Steffens turned the screen to full magnification and watched silently.

After a while he saw a city.

The main screen being on, the whole crew saw it. Someone shouted and they stopped to stare, and Steffens was about to call for altitude when he saw that the city was dead.

He looked down on splintered walls that were like cloudy glass pieces rising above a plain, rising in a shattered circle. Near the center of the city, there was a huge, charred hole at least three miles in diameter and very deep. In all the piled rubble, nothing moved.

Steffens went down low to make sure, then brought the ship around and headed out across the main continent into the bright area of the sun. The rocks rolled by below, there was no vegetation at all, and then there were more cities--all with the black depression, the circular stamp that blotted away and fused the buildings into nothing.

No one on the ship had anything to say. None had ever seen a war, for there had not been war on Earth or near it for more than three hundred years.

The ship circled around to the dark side of the planet. When they were down below a mile, the radiation counters began to react. It became apparent, from the dials, that there could be nothing alive.

After a while Ball said: "Well, which do you figure? Did our friends from the fourth planet do this, or were they the same people as these?"

Steffens did not take his eyes from the screen. They were coming around to the daylight side.

"We'll go down and look for the answer," he said. "Break out the radiation suits."

He paused, thinking. If the ones on the fourth planet were alien to this world, they were from outer space, could not have come from one of the other planets here. They had starships and were warlike. Then, thousands of years ago. He began to realize how important it really was that Ball's question be answered.

When the ship had gone very low, looking for a landing site, Steffens was still by the screen. It was Steffens, then, who saw the thing move.

Down far below, it had been a still black shadow, and then it moved.

Steffens froze. And he knew, even at that distance, that it was a robot.

Tiny and black, a mass of hanging arms and legs, the thing went gliding down the slope of a hill. Steffens saw it clearly for a full second, saw the dull ball of its head tilt upward as the ship came over, and then the hill was past.

* * * * *

Quickly Steffens called for height. The ship bucked beneath him and blasted straight up; some of the crew went crashing to the deck. Steffens remained by the screen, increasing the magnification as the ship drew away. And he saw another, then two, then a black gliding group, all matched with bunches of hanging arms.

Nothing alive but robots, he thought, _robots_. He adjusted to full close up as quickly as he could and the picture focused on the screen. Behind him he heard a crewman grunt in amazement.

A band of clear, plasticlike stuff ran round the head--it would be the eye, a band of eye that saw all ways. On the top of the head was a single round spot of the plastic, and the rest was black metal, joined, he realized, with fantastic perfection. The angle of sight was now almost perpendicular. He could see very little of the branching arms of the trunk, but what had been on the screen was enough. They were the most perfect robots he had ever seen.

The ship leveled off. Steffens had no idea what to do; the sudden sight of the moving things had unnerved him. He had already sounded the alert, flicked out the defense screens. Now he had nothing to do. He tried to concentrate on what the League Law would have him do.

The Law was no help. Contact with planet-bound races was forbidden under any circumstances. But could a bunch of robots be called a race? The Law said nothing about robots because Earthmen had none. The building of imaginative robots was expressly forbidden. But at any rate, Steffens thought, he had made contact already.

While Steffens stood by the screen, completely bewildered for the first time in his space career, Lieutenant Ball came up, hobbling slightly. From the bright new bruise on his cheek, Steffens guessed that the sudden climb had caught him unaware. The exec was pale with surprise.

"What were they?" he said blankly. "Lord, they looked like robots!"

"They were."

Ball stared confoundedly at the screen. The things were now a confusion of dots in the mist.

"Almost humanoid," Steffens said, "but not quite."

Ball was slowly absorbing the situation. He turned to gaze inquiringly at Steffens.

"Well, what do we do now?"

Steffens shrugged. "They saw us. We could leave now and let them quite possibly make a ... a legend out of our visit, or we could go down and see if they tie in with the buildings on Tyban IV."

"_Can_ we go down?"

"Legally? I don't know. If they are robots, yes, since robots cannot constitute a race. But there's another possibility." He tapped his fingers on the screen confusedly. "They don't have to be robots at all. They could be the natives."

Ball gulped. "I don't follow you."

"They could be the original inhabitants of this planet--the brains of them, at least, protected in radiation-proof metal. Anyway," he added, "they're the most perfect mechanicals I've ever seen."

Ball shook his head, sat down abruptly. Steffens turned from the screen, strode nervously across the Main Deck, thinking.

The Mapping Command, they called it. Theoretically, all he was supposed to do was make a closeup examination of unexplored systems, checking for the presence of life-forms as well as for the possibilities of human colonization. Make a check and nothing else. But he knew very clearly that if he returned to Sirius base without investigating this robot situation, he could very well be court-martialed one way or the other, either for breaking the Law of Contact or for dereliction of duty.

And there was also the possibility, which abruptly occurred to him, that the robots might well be prepared to blow his ship to hell and gone.

He stopped in the center of the deck. A whole new line of thought opened up. If the robots were armed and ready ... could this be an outpost?

"_An outpost!_"

He turned and raced for the bridge. If he went in and landed and was lost, then the League might never know in time. If he went in and

stirred up trouble....

The thought in his mind was scattered suddenly, like a mist blown away. A voice was speaking in his mind, a deep calm voice that seemed to say:

"_Greetings. Do not be alarmed. We do not wish you to be alarmed. Our desire is only to serve...._"

* * * * *

"Greetings, it said! Greetings!" Ball was mumbling incredulously through shocked lips.

Everyone on the ship had heard the voice. When it spoke again, Steffens was not sure whether it was just one voice or many voices.

"We await your coming," it said gravely, and repeated: "Our desire is only to serve."

And then the robots sent a _picture_.

As perfect and as clear as a tridim movie, a rectangular plate took shape in Steffens' mind. On the face of the plate, standing alone against a background of red-brown, bare rocks, was one of the robots. With slow, perfect movement, the robot carefully lifted one of the hanging arms of its side, of its _right_ side, and extended it toward Steffens, a graciously offered hand.

Steffens felt a peculiar, compelling urge to take the hand, realized right away that the urge to take the hand was not entirely his. The robot mind had helped.

When the picture vanished, he knew that the others had seen it. He waited for a while; there was no further contact, but the feeling of the robot's urging was still strong within him. He had an idea that, if they wanted to, the robots could control his mind. So when nothing more happened, he began to lose his fear.

While the crew watched in fascination, Steffens tried to talk back. He concentrated hard on what he was saying, said it aloud for good measure, then held his own hand extended in the robot manner of shaking hands.

"Greetings," he said, because it was what _they_ had said, and explained: "We have come from the stars."

It was overly dramatic, but so was the whole situation. He wondered baffledly if he should have let the Alien Contact crew handle it. Order someone to stand there, feeling like a fool, and _think_ a message?

No, it was his responsibility; he had to go on:

"We request--we respectfully request permission to land upon your planet."

* * * * *

Steffens had not realized that there were so many.

They had been gathering since his ship was first seen, and now there were hundreds of them clustered upon the hill. Others were arriving even as the skiff landed; they glided in over the rocky hills with fantastic ease and power, so that Steffens felt a momentary anxiety. Most of the robots were standing with the silent immobility of metal. Others threaded their way to the fore and came near the skiff, but none touched it, and a circle was cleared for Steffens when he came out.

One of the near robots came forward alone, moving, as Steffens now saw, on a number of short, incredibly strong and agile legs. The black thing paused before him, extended a hand as it had done in the picture. Steffens took it, he hoped, warmly; felt the power of the metal through the glove of his suit.

"Welcome," the robot said, speaking again to his mind, and now Steffens detected a peculiar alteration in the robot's tone. It was less friendly now, less--Steffens could not understand--somehow less _interested_, as if the robot had been--expecting someone else.

"Thank you," Steffens said. "We are deeply grateful for your permission to land."

"Our desire," the robot repeated mechanically, "is only to serve."

Suddenly, Steffens began to feel alone, surrounded by machines. He tried to push the thought out of his mind, because he knew that they _should_ seem inhuman. But....

"Will the others come down?" asked the robot, still mechanically.

Steffens felt his embarrassment. The ship lay high in the mist above, jets throbbing gently.

"They must remain with the ship," Steffens said aloud, trusting to the robot's formality not to ask him why. Although, if they could read his mind, there was no need to ask.

For a long while, neither spoke, long enough for Steffens to grow tense and uncomfortable. He could not think of a thing to say, the robot was

obviously waiting, and so, in desperation, he signaled the Aliencon men to come on out of the skiff.

They came, wonderingly, and the ring of robots widened. Steffens heard the one robot speak again. The voice was now much more friendly.

"We hope you will forgive us for intruding upon your thought. It is our--custom--not to communicate unless we are called upon. But when we observed that you were in ignorance of our real--nature--and were about to leave our planet, we decided to put aside our custom, so that you might base your decision upon sufficient data."

Steffens replied haltingly that he appreciated their action.

"We perceive," the robot went on, "that you are unaware of our complete access to your mind, and would perhaps be--dismayed--to learn that we have been gathering information from you. We must--apologize. Our only purpose was so that we could communicate with you. Only that information was taken which is necessary for communication and--understanding. We will enter your minds henceforth only at your request."

Steffens did not react to the news that his mind was being probed as violently as he might have. Nevertheless it was a shock, and he retreated into observant silence as the Aliencon men went to work.

The robot which seemed to have been doing the speaking was in no way different from any of the others in the group. Since each of the robots was immediately aware of all that was being said or thought, Steffens guessed that they had sent one forward just for appearance's sake, because they perceived that the Earthmen would feel more at home. The picture of the extended hand, the characteristic handshake of Earthmen, had probably been borrowed, too, for the same purpose of making him and the others feel at ease. The one jarring note was the robot's momentary lapse, those unexplainable few seconds when the things had seemed almost disappointed. Steffens gave up wondering about that and began to examine the first robot in detail.

It was not very tall, being at least a foot shorter than the Earthmen. The most peculiar thing about it, except for the circling eye-band of the head, was a mass of symbols which were apparently engraved upon the metal chest. Symbols in row upon row--numbers, perhaps--were upon the chest, and repeated again below the level of the arms, and continued in orderly rows across the front of the robot, all the way down to the base of the trunk. If they were numbers, Steffens thought, then it was a remarkably complicated system. But he noticed the same pattern on the nearer robots, all apparently identical. He was forced to conclude that the symbols were merely decoration and let it go tentatively at that, although the answer seemed illogical.

It wasn't until he was on his way home that Steffens remembered the symbols again. And only then did he realized what they were.

* * * * *

After a while, convinced that there was no danger, Steffens had the ship brought down. When the crew came out of the airlock, they were met by the robots, and each man found himself with a robot at his side, humbly requesting to be of service. There were literally thousands of the robots now, come from all over the barren horizon. The mass of them stood apart, immobile on a plain near the ship, glinting in the sun like a vast, metallic field of black wheat.

The robots had obviously been built to serve. Steffens began to _feel_ their pleasure, to sense it in spite of the blank, expressionless faces. They were almost like children in their eagerness, yet they were still reserved. Whoever had built them, Steffens thought in wonder, had built them well.

Ball came to join Steffens, staring at the robots through the clear plastic of his helmet with baffledly widened eyes. A robot moved out from the mass in the field, allied itself to him. The first to speak had remained with Steffens.

Realizing that the robot could hear every word he was saying, Ball was for a while apprehensive. But the sheer unreality of standing and talking with a multi-limbed, intelligent hunk of dead metal upon the bare rock of a dead, ancient world, the unreality of it slowly died. It was impossible not to like the things. There was something in their very lines which was pleasant and relaxing.

Their builders, Steffens thought, had probably thought of that, too.

"There's no harm in them," said Ball at last, openly, not minding if the robots heard. "They seem actually glad we're here. My God, whoever heard of a robot being glad?"

Steffens, embarrassed, spoke quickly to the nearest mechanical: "I hope you will forgive us our curiosity, but--yours is a remarkable race. We have never before made contact with a race like yours." It was said haltingly, but it was the best he could do.

The robot made a singularly human nodding motion of its head.

"I perceive that the nature of our construction is unfamiliar to you. Your question is whether or not we are entirely 'mechanical.' I am not exactly certain as to what the word 'mechanical' is intended to convey--I would have to examine your thought more fully--but I believe

that there is fundamental similarity between our structures."

The robot paused. Steffens had a distinct impression that it was disconcerted.

"I must tell you," the thing went on, "that we ourselves are--curious." It stopped suddenly, struggling with a word it could not comprehend. Steffens waited, listening with absolute interest. It said at length:

"We know of only two types of living structure. Ours, which is largely metallic, and that of the _Makers_, which would appear to be somewhat more like yours. I am not a--doctor--and therefore cannot acquaint you with the specific details of the Makers' composition, but if you are interested I will have a doctor brought forward. It will be glad to be of assistance."

It was Steffens' turn to struggle, and the robot waited patiently while Ball and the second robot looked on in silence. The Makers, obviously, were whoever or whatever had built the robots, and the "doctors," Steffens decided, were probably just that--doctor-robots, designed specifically to care for the apparently flesh-bodies of the Makers.

The efficiency of the things continued to amaze him, but the question he had been waiting to ask came out now with a rush:

"Can you tell us where the Makers are?"

Both robots stood motionless. It occurred to Steffens that he couldn't really be sure which was speaking. The voice that came to him spoke with difficulty.

"The Makers--are not here."

Steffens stared in puzzlement. The robot detected his confusion and went on:

"The Makers have gone away. They have been gone for a very long time."

Could that be _pain_ in its voice, Steffens wondered, and then the spectre of the ruined cities rose harsh in his mind.

War. The Makers had all been killed in that war. And these had not been killed.

He tried to grasp it, but he couldn't. There were robots here in the midst of a radiation so lethal that _nothing_, _nothing_ could live; robots on a dead planet, living in an atmosphere of carbon dioxide.

The carbon dioxide brought him up sharp.

If there had been life here once, there would have been plant life as well, and therefore oxygen. If the war had been so long ago that the free oxygen had since gone out of the atmosphere--good God, how old were the robots? Steffens looked at Ball, then at the silent robots, then out across the field to where the rest of them stood. The black wheat. Steffens felt a deep chill.

Were they immortal?

* * * * *

"Would you like to see a doctor?"

Steffens jumped at the familiar words, then realized to what the robot was referring.

"No, not yet," he said, "thank you." He swallowed hard as the robots continued waiting patiently.

"Could you tell me," he said at last, "how old you are? Individually?"

"By your reckoning," said his robot, and paused to make the calculation, "I am forty-four years, seven months, and eighteen days of age, with ten years and approximately nine months yet to be alive."

Steffens tried to understand that.

"It would perhaps simplify our conversations," said the robot, "if you were to refer to me by a name, as is your custom. Using the first--letters--of my designation, my name would translate as Elb."

"Glad to meet you," Steffens mumbled.

"You are called 'Stef,'" said the robot obligingly. Then it added, pointing an arm at the robot near Ball: "The age of--Peb--is seventeen years, one month and four days. Peb has therefore remaining some thirty-eight years."

Steffens was trying to keep up. Then the life span was obviously about fifty-five years. But the cities, and the carbon dioxide? The robot, Elb, had said that the Makers were similar to him, and therefore oxygen and plant life would have been needed. Unless--

He remembered the buildings on Tyban IV.

Unless the Makers had not come from this planet at all.

His mind helplessly began to revolve. It was Ball who restored order.

"Do you build yourselves?" the exec asked.

Peb answered quickly, that faint note of happiness again apparent, as if the robot was glad for the opportunity of answering.

"No, we do not build ourselves. We are made by the--" another pause for a word--"by the _Factory_."

"The Factory?"

"Yes. It was built by the Makers. Would you care to see it?"

Both of the Earthmen nodded dumbly.

"Would you prefer to use your--skiff? It is quite a long way from here."

It was indeed a long way, even by skiff. Some of the Aliencon crew went along with them. And near the edge of the twilight zone, on the other side of the world, they saw the Factory outlined in the dim light of dusk. A huge, fantastic block, wrought of gray and cloudy metal, lay in a valley between two worn mountains. Steffens went down low, circling in the skiff, stared in awe at the size of the building. Robots moved outside the thing, little black bugs in the distance--moving around their birthplace.

* * * * *

The Earthmen remained for several weeks. During that time, Steffens was usually with Elb, talking now as often as he listened, and the Aliencon team roamed the planet freely, investigating what was certainly the strangest culture in history. There was still the mystery of those buildings on Tyban IV; that, as well as the robots' origin, would have to be cleared up before they could leave.

Surprisingly, Steffens did not think about the future. Whenever he came near a robot, he sensed such a general, comfortable air of good feeling that it warmed him, and he was so preoccupied with watching the robots that he did little thinking.

Something he had not realized at the beginning was that he was as unusual to the robots as they were to him. It came to him with a great shock that not one of the robots had ever seen a living thing. Not a bug, a worm, a leaf. They did not know what flesh was. Only the doctors knew that, and none of them could readily understand what was meant by the words "organic matter." It had taken them some time to recognize that the Earthmen wore suits which were not parts of their bodies, and it was even more difficult for them to understand why the suits were needed.

But when they did understand, the robots did a surprising thing.

At first, because of the excessive radiation, none of the Earthmen could remain outside the ship for long, even in radiation suits. And one morning, when Steffens came out of the ship, it was to discover that hundreds of the robots, working through the night, had effectively decontaminated the entire area.

It was at this point that Steffens asked how many robots there were. He learned to his amazement that there were more than nine million. The great mass of them had politely remained a great distance from the ship, spread out over the planet, since they were highly radioactive.

Steffens, meanwhile, courteously allowed Elb to probe into his mind. The robot extracted all the knowledge of matter that Steffens held, pondered over the knowledge and tried to digest it, and passed it on to the other robots. Steffens, in turn, had a difficult time picturing the mind of a thing that had never known life.

He had a vague idea of the robot's history--more, perhaps, than they knew themselves--but he refrained from forming an opinion until Aliencon made its report. What fascinated him was Elb's amazing philosophy, the only outlook, really, that the robot could have had.

* * * * *

"What do you _do_?" Steffens asked.

Elb replied quickly, with characteristic simplicity: "We can do very little. A certain amount of physical knowledge was imparted to us at birth by the Makers. We spend the main part of our time expanding that knowledge wherever possible. We have made some progress in the natural sciences, and some in mathematics. Our purpose in being, you see, is to serve the Makers. Any ability we can acquire will make us that much more fit to serve when the Makers return."

"When they return?" It had not occurred to Steffens until now that the robots expected the Makers to do so.

Elb regarded him out of the band of the circling eye. "I see you had surmised that the Makers were not coming back."

If the robot could have laughed, Steffens thought it would have, then. But it just stood there, motionless, its tone politely emphatic.

"It has always been our belief that the Makers would return. Why else would we have been built?"

Steffens thought the robot would go on, but it didn't. The question, to Elb, was no question at all.

Although Steffens knew already what the robot could not possibly have known--that the Makers were gone and would never come back--he was a long time understanding. What he did was push this speculation into the back of his mind, to keep it from Elb. He had no desire to destroy a faith.

But it created a problem in him. He had begun to picture for Elb the structure of human society, and the robot--a machine which did not eat or sleep--listened gravely and tried to understand. One day Steffens mentioned God.

"God?" the robot repeated without comprehension. "What is God?"

Steffens explained briefly, and the robot answered:

"It is a matter which has troubled us. We thought at first that you were the Makers returning--" Steffens remembered the brief lapse, the seeming disappointment he had sensed--"but then we probed your minds and found that you were not, that you were another kind of being, unlike either the Makers or ourselves. You were not even--" Elb caught himself--"you did not happen to be telepaths. Therefore we troubled over who made you. We did detect the word 'Maker' in your theology, but it seemed to have a peculiar--" Elb paused for a long while--"an untouchable, intangible meaning which varies among you."

Steffens understood. He nodded.

The Makers were the robots' God, were all the God they needed. The Makers had built them, the planet, the universe. If he were to ask them who made the Makers, it would be like their asking him who made God.

It was an ironic parallel, and he smiled to himself.

But on that planet, it was the last time he smiled.

* * * * *

The report from Aliencon was finished at the end of the fifth week. Lieutenant Ball brought it in to Steffens in his cabin, laid it on the desk before him.

"Get set," Ball advised stiffly, indicating the paper. There was a strained, brittle expression on his face. "I sort of figured it, but I didn't know it was this bad."

When Steffens looked up in surprise, Ball said:

"You don't know. Read it. Go ahead." The exec turned tautly and left the room.

Steffens stared after him, then looked down at the paper. The hint he had of the robots' history came back into his mind. Nervously, he picked up the report and started to read.

The story unfolded objectively. It was clear and cold, the way formal reports must always be. Yet there was a great deal of emotion in it. Even Aliencon couldn't help that.

What it told was this:

The Makers had been almost humanoid. Almost, but with certain notable exceptions. They were telepaths--no doubt an important factor in their remarkable technological progress--and were equipped with a secondary pair of arms. The robot-doctors were able to give flawless accounts of their body chemistry, which was similar to Earth-type, and the rubble of the cities had given a certain amount of information concerning their society and habits. An attached paper described the sociology, but Steffens put it aside until sometime later.

There had been other Factories. The remains of them had been found in several places, on each of the other continents. They had been built sometime prior to the war, and all but one of the Factories had subsequently been destroyed.

Yet the Makers were not, as Steffens had supposed, a warlike people. Telepathy had given them the power to know each other's minds and to interchange ideas, and their record of peace was favorable, especially when compared with Earth's. Nevertheless, a war had begun, for some reason Aliencon could not find, and it had obviously gotten out of hand.

Radiation and bacteria eventually destroyed the Makers; the last abortive efforts created enough radiation to destroy life entirely. There were the germs and the bombs and the burning rays, and in the end everything was blasted and died--everything, that is, but the one lone Factory. By a pure, blind freak, it survived.

And, naturally, it kept turning out robots.

It was powered by an atomic pile, stocked with materials which, when combined with the returning, worn-out robots, enabled it to keep producing indefinitely. The process, even of repair, was entirely automatic.

Year after year, the robots came out in a slow, steady stream. Ungoverned, uninstructed, they gathered around the Factory and waited,

communicated only rarely among themselves. Gradually the memory of war, of life--of everything but that which was imprisoned in their minds at birth--was lost.

The robots kept coming, and they stood outside the Factory.

The robot brain, by far the finest thing the Makers had ever built, was variable. There was never a genius brain, and never a moron brain, yet the intelligence of the robots varied considerably in between. Slowly, over the long years, the more intelligent among them began to communicate with each other, to inquire, and then to move away from the Factory, searching.

They looked for someone to serve and, of course, there was no one. The Makers were gone, but the crime was not in that alone. For when the robots were built, the Makers had done this:

Along with the first successful robot brain, the Makers had realized the necessity of creating a machine which could never turn against them. The present robot brain was the result. As Steffens had already sensed, _the robots could feel pain_. Not the pain of physical injury, for there were no nerves in the metal bodies, but the pain of frustration, the pressure of thwarted emotion, _mental_ pain.

And so, into the robot brain, the Makers had placed this prime Directive: the robots could only feel content, free from the pain, as long as they were serving the Makers. The robots must act for the Makers, must be continually engaged in carrying out the wishes of the Makers, or else there was a slowly growing irritation, a restlessness and discontent which mounted as the unserving days went by.

And there were no more Makers to serve.

* * * * *

The pain was not unbearable. The Makers themselves were not fully aware of the potentialities of the robot brain, and therefore did not risk deranging it. So the pressure reached a peak and leveled off, and for all of the days of the robots' lives, they felt it never-ending, awake and aware, each of them, for fifty-five years.

And the robots never stopped coming.

A millenium passed, during which the robots began to move and to think for themselves. Yet it was much longer before they found a way in which to serve.

The atomic pile which powered the Factory, having gone on for almost five thousand years, eventually wore out. The power ceased. The

Factory stopped.

It was the first _event_ in the robots' history. Never before had there been a time when they had known anything at all to alter the course of their lives, except the varying weather and the unvarying pain. There was one among them now that began to reason.

It saw that no more robots were being produced, and although it could not be sure whether or not this was as the Makers had ordained, it formed an idea. If the purpose of the robots was to serve, then they would fail in that purpose if they were to die out. The robot thought this and communicated it to the others, and then, together, they began to rebuild the pile.

It was not difficult. The necessary knowledge was already in their minds, implanted at birth. The significance lay in the fact that, for the first time in their existence, the robots had acted upon their own initiative, had begun to serve again. Thus the pain ceased.

When the pile was finished, the robots felt the return of the pain and, having once begun, they continued to attempt to serve. A great many examined the Factory, found that they were able to improve upon the structure of their bodies, so that they might be better able to serve the Makers when they returned. Accordingly, they worked in the Factory, perfecting themselves--although they could not improve the brains--and many others left the Factory and began to examine mathematics and the physical universe.

It was not hard for them to build a primitive spaceship, for the Makers had been on the verge of interstellar flight, and they flew it hopefully throughout the solar system, looking to see if the Makers were there. Finding no one, they left the buildings on Tyban IV as a wistful monument, with a hope that the Makers would some day pass this way and be able to use them.

Millenia passed. The pile broke down again, was rebuilt, and so the cycle was repeated. By infinitesimal steps, the robots learned and recorded their learning in the minds of new robots. Eventually they reached the limits of their capability.

The pain returned and never left.

* * * * *

Steffens left his desk, went over and leaned against the screen. For a long while he stood gazing through the mists of carbon air at the pitiful, loyal mechanicals who thronged outside the ship. He felt an almost overwhelming desire to break something, anything, but all he could do was swear to himself.

Ball came back, looked at Steffens' eyes and into them. His own were sick.

"Twenty-five thousand years," he said thickly, "that's how long it was.
Twenty-five thousand years...."

Steffens was pale and wordless. The mass of the robots outside stood immobile, ageless among rock which was the same, hurting, hurting. A fragment of an old poem came across Steffens' mind. "They also serve who only stand and wait...."

Not since he was very young had he been so deeply moved. He stood up rigidly and began to talk to himself, saying in his mind:

It is all over now. To hell with what is past. We will take them away from this place and let them serve and, by God....

He faltered. But the knowledge of what could be done strengthened him. Earthmen would have to come in ships to take the robots away. It would be a little while, but after all those years a little while was nothing, less than nothing. He stood there thinking of the things the robots could do, of how, in the Mapping Command alone, they would be invaluable. Temperature and atmosphere meant nothing to them. They could land on almost any world, could mine and build and develop....

And so it would be ended. The robots would serve Man.

Steffens took one long, painful breath. Then he strode from the room without speaking to Ball, went forward to the lockers and pulled out a suit, and a moment later he was in the airlock.

He had one more thing to do, and it would be at once the gladdest and most difficult job that he had ever attempted. He had to tell the robots.

He had to go out into the sand and face them, tell them that all of the centuries of pain had been for nothing, that the Makers were dead and would never return, that every robot built for twenty-five thousand years had been just surplus, purposeless. And yet--and this was how he was able to do it--he was also coming to tell them that the wasted years were over, that the years of doing had begun.

As he stepped from the airlock he saw Elb standing, immobile, waiting by the ship. In the last few seconds Steffens realized that it was not necessary to put this into words.

When he reached the robot, he put forth a hand and touched Elb's arm, and said very softly:

"Elb, my friend, you must look into my mind--"

And the robot, as always, obeyed.

The Dog Hervey

from The Project Gutenberg eBook, *A Diversity of Creatures*, by Rudyard Kipling
(April 1914)

My friend Attley, who would give away his own head if you told him you had lost yours, was giving away a six-months-old litter of Bettina's pups, and half-a-dozen women were in raptures at the show on Mittleham lawn.

We picked by lot. Mrs. Godfrey drew first choice; her married daughter, second. I was third, but waived my right because I was already owned by Malachi, Bettina's full brother, whom I had brought over in the car to visit his nephews and nieces, and he would have slain them all if I had taken home one. Milly, Mrs. Godfrey's younger daughter, pounced on my rejection with squeals of delight, and Attley turned to a dark, sallow-skinned, slack-mouthed girl, who had come over for tennis, and invited her to pick. She put on a pince-nez that made her look like a camel, knelt clumsily, for she was long from the hip to the knee, breathed hard, and considered the last couple.

'I think I'd like that sandy-pied one,' she said.

'Oh, not him, Miss Sichliffe!' Attley cried. 'He was overlaid or had sunstroke or something. They call him The Looney in the kennels. Besides, he squints.'

'I think that's rather fetching,' she answered. Neither Malachi nor I had ever seen a squinting dog before.

'That's chorea--St. Vitus's dance,' Mrs. Godfrey put in. 'He ought to have been drowned.'

'But I like his cast of countenance,' the girl persisted.

'He doesn't look a good life,' I said, 'but perhaps he can be patched up.' Miss Sichliffe turned crimson; I saw Mrs. Godfrey exchange a glance with her married daughter, and knew I had said something which would have to be lived down.

'Yes,' Miss Sichliffe went on, her voice shaking, 'he isn't a good life, but perhaps I can--patch him up. Come here, sir.' The misshapen beast lurched toward her, squinting down his own nose till he fell over his own toes. Then, luckily, Bettina ran across the lawn and reminded Malachi of their puppyhood. All that family are as queer as Dick's hatband, and fight like man and wife. I had to separate them, and Mrs. Godfrey helped me till they retired under the rhododendrons and had it out in silence.

'D'you know what that girl's father was?' Mrs. Godfrey asked.

'No,' I replied. 'I loathe her for her own sake. She breathes through her mouth.'

'He was a retired doctor,' she explained. 'He used to pick up stormy young men in the repentant stage, take them home, and patch them up till they were sound enough to be insured. Then he insured them heavily, and let them out into the world again--with an appetite. Of course, no one knew him while he was alive, but he left pots of money to his daughter.'

'Strictly legitimate--highly respectable,' I said. 'But what a life for the daughter!'

'Mustn't it have been! _Now_ d'you realise what you said just now?'

'Perfectly; and now you've made me quite happy, shall we go back to the house?'

When we reached it they were all inside, sitting in committee on names.

'What shall you call yours?' I heard Milly ask Miss Sichliffe.

'Harvey,' she replied--'Harvey's Sauce, you know. He's going to be quite saucy when I've'--she saw Mrs. Godfrey and me coming through the French window--'when he's stronger.'

Attley, the well-meaning man, to make me feel at ease, asked what I thought of the name.

'Oh, splendid,' I said at random. 'H with an A, A with an R, R with a--'

'But that's Little Bingo,' some one said, and they all laughed.

Miss Sichliffe, her hands joined across her long knees, drawled, 'You ought always to verify your quotations.'

It was not a kindly thrust, but something in the word 'quotation' set the automatic side of my brain at work on some shadow of a word or phrase that kept itself out of memory's reach as a cat sits just beyond a dog's jump. When I was going home, Miss Sichliffe came up to me in the twilight, the pup on a leash, swinging her big shoes at the end of her tennis-racket.

'Sorry,' she said in her thick schoolboy-like voice. 'I'm sorry for what I said to you about verifying quotations. I didn't know you well enough and--anyhow, I oughtn't to have.'

'But you were quite right about Little Bingo,' I answered. 'The spelling ought to have reminded me.'

'Yes, of course. It's the spelling,' she said, and slouched off with the pup sliding after her. Once again my brain began to worry after something that would have meant something if it had been properly spelled. I confided my trouble to Malachi on the way home, but Bettina had bitten him in four places, and he was busy.

Weeks later, Attley came over to see me, and before his car stopped Malachi let me know that Bettina was sitting beside the chauffeur. He greeted her by the scruff of the neck as she hopped down; and I greeted Mrs. Godfrey, Attley, and a big basket.

'You've got to help me,' said Attley tiredly. We took the basket into the garden, and there staggered out the angular shadow of a sandy-pied, broken-haired terrier, with one imbecile and one delirious ear, and two most hideous squints. Bettina and Malachi, already at grips on the lawn, saw him, let go, and fled in opposite directions.

'Why have you brought that fetid hound here?' I demanded.

'Harvey? For you to take care of,' said Attley. 'He's had distemper, but _I_ 'm going abroad.'

'Take him with you. I won't have him. He's mentally afflicted.'

'Look here,' Attley almost shouted, 'do I strike you as a fool?'

'Always,' said I.

'Well, then, if you say so, and Ella says so, that proves I ought to go abroad.'

'Will's wrong, quite wrong,' Mrs. Godfrey interrupted; 'but you must take the pup.'

'My dear boy, my dear boy, don't you ever give anything to a woman,' Attley snorted.

Bit by bit I got the story out of them in the quiet garden (never a sign from Bettina and Malachi), while Harvey stared me out of countenance, first with one cuttlefish eye and then with the other.

It appeared that, a month after Miss Sichliffe took him, the dog Harvey developed distemper. Miss Sichliffe had nursed him herself for some time; then she carried him in her arms the two miles to Mittleham, and wept--actually wept--at Attley's feet, saying that Harvey was all she had or expected to have in this world, and Attley must cure him. Attley,

being by wealth, position, and temperament guardian to all lame dogs, had put everything aside for this unsavoury job, and, he asserted, Miss Sichliffe had virtually lived with him ever since.

'She went home at night, of course,' he exploded, 'but the rest of the time she simply infested the premises. Goodness knows, I'm not particular, but it was a scandal. Even the servants!... Three and four times a day, and notes in between, to know how the beast was. Hang it all, don't laugh! And wanting to send me flowers and goldfish. Do I look as if I wanted goldfish? Can't you two stop for a minute?' (Mrs. Godfrey and I were clinging to each other for support.) 'And it isn't as if I was--was so alluring a personality, is it?'

Attley commands more trust, goodwill, and affection than most men, for he is that rare angel, an absolutely unselfish bachelor, content to be run by contending syndicates of zealous friends. His situation seemed desperate, and I told him so.

'Instant flight is your only remedy,' was my verdict. 'I'll take care of both your cars while you're away, and you can send me over all the greenhouse fruit.'

'But why should I be chased out of my house by a she-dromedary?' he wailed.

'Oh, stop! Stop!' Mrs. Godfrey sobbed. 'You're both wrong. I admit you're right, but I _know_ you're wrong.'

'Three _and_ four times a day,' said Attley, with an awful countenance. 'I'm not a vain man, but--look here, Ella, I'm not sensitive, I hope, but if you persist in making a joke of it--'

'Oh, be quiet!' she almost shrieked. 'D'you imagine for one instant that your friends would ever let Mittleham pass out of their hands? I quite agree it is unseemly for a grown girl to come to Mittleham at all hours of the day and night--'

'I told you she went home o' nights,' Attley growled.

'Specially if she goes home o' nights. Oh, but think of the life she must have led, Will!'

'I'm not interfering with it; only she must leave me alone.'

'She may want to patch you up and insure you,' I suggested.

'D'you know what _you_ are?' Mrs. Godfrey turned on me with the smile I have feared for the last quarter of a century. 'You're the nice, kind, wise, doggy friend. You don't know how wise and nice you are supposed to

be. Will has sent Harvey to you to complete the poor angel's convalescence. You know all about dogs, or Will wouldn't have done it. He's written her that. You're too far off for her to make daily calls on you. P'r'aps she'll drop in two or three times a week, and write on other days. But it doesn't matter what she does, because you don't own Mittleham, don't you see?"

I told her I saw most clearly.

'Oh, you'll get over that in a few days,' Mrs. Godfrey countered. 'You're the sporting, responsible, doggy friend who--'

'He used to look at me like that at first,' said Attley, with a visible shudder, 'but he gave it up after a bit. It's only because you're new to him.'

'But, confound you! he's a ghoul--' I began.

'And when he gets quite well, you'll send him back to her direct with your love, and she'll give you some pretty four-tailed goldfish,' said Mrs. Godfrey, rising. 'That's all settled. Car, please. We're going to Brighton to lunch together.'

They ran before I could get into my stride, so I told the dog Harvey what I thought of them and his mistress. He never shifted his position, but stared at me, an intense, lopsided stare, eye after eye. Malachi came along when he had seen his sister off, and from a distance counselled me to drown the brute and consort with gentlemen again. But the dog Harvey never even cocked his cockable ear.

And so it continued as long as he was with me. Where I sat, he sat and stared; where I walked, he walked beside, head stiffly slewed over one shoulder in single-barrelled contemplation of me. He never gave tongue, never closed in for a caress, seldom let me stir a step alone. And, to my amazement, Malachi, who suffered no stranger to live within our gates, saw this gaunt, growing, green-eyed devil wipe him out of my service and company without a whimper. Indeed, one would have said the situation interested him, for he would meet us returning from grim walks together, and look alternately at Harvey and at me with the same quivering interest that he showed at the mouth of a rat-hole. Outside these inspections, Malachi withdrew himself as only a dog or a woman can.

Miss Sichliffe came over after a few days (luckily I was out) with some elaborate story of paying calls in the neighbourhood. She sent me a note of thanks next day. I was reading it when Harvey and Malachi entered and disposed themselves as usual, Harvey close up to stare at me, Malachi half under the sofa, watching us both. Out of curiosity I returned Harvey's stare, then pulled his lopsided head on to my knee, and took

his eye for several minutes. Now, in Malachi's eye I can see at any hour all that there is of the normal decent dog, flecked here and there with that strained half-soul which man's love and association have added to his nature. But with Harvey the eye was perplexed, as a tortured man's. Only by looking far into its deeps could one make out the spirit of the proper animal, beclouded and cowering beneath some unfair burden.

Leggatt, my chauffeur, came in for orders.

'How d'you think Harvey's coming on?' I said, as I rubbed the brute's gulping neck. The vet had warned me of the possibilities of spinal trouble following distemper.

'He ain't _my_ fancy,' was the reply. 'But _I_ don't question his comings and goings so long as I 'aven't to sit alone in a room with him.'

'Why? He's as meek as Moses,' I said.

'He fair gives me the creeps. P'r'aps he'll go out in fits.'

But Harvey, as I wrote his mistress from time to time, throve, and when he grew better, would play by himself grisly games of spying, walking up, hailing, and chasing another dog. From these he would break off of a sudden and return to his normal stiff gait, with the air of one who had forgotten some matter of life and death, which could be reached only by staring at me. I left him one evening posturing with the unseen on the lawn, and went inside to finish some letters for the post. I must have been at work nearly an hour, for I was going to turn on the lights, when I felt there was somebody in the room whom, the short hairs at the back of my neck warned me, I was not in the least anxious to face. There was a mirror on the wall. As I lifted my eyes to it I saw the dog Harvey reflected near the shadow by the closed door. He had reared himself full-length on his hind legs, his head a little one side to clear a sofa between us, and he was looking at me. The face, with its knitted brows and drawn lips, was the face of a dog, but the look, for the fraction of time that I caught it, was human--wholly and horribly human. When the blood in my body went forward again he had dropped to the floor, and was merely studying me in his usual one-eyed fashion. Next day I returned him to Miss Sichliffe. I would not have kept him another day for the wealth of Asia, or even Ella Godfrey's approval.

Miss Sichliffe's house I discovered to be a mid-Victorian mansion of peculiar villainy even for its period, surrounded by gardens of conflicting colours, all dazzling with glass and fresh paint on ironwork. Striped blinds, for it was a blazing autumn morning, covered most of the windows, and a voice sang to the piano an almost forgotten song of Jean Ingelow's--

Methought that the stars were blinking bright,
And the old brig's sails unfurled--

Down came the loud pedal, and the unrestrained cry swelled out across a
bed of tritomas consuming in their own fires--

When I said I will sail to my love this night
On the other side of the world.

I have no music, but the voice drew. I waited till the end:

Oh, maid most dear, I am not here
I have no place apart--
No dwelling more on sea or shore,
But only in thy heart.

It seemed to me a poor life that had no more than that to do at eleven
o'clock of a Tuesday forenoon. Then Miss Sichliffe suddenly lumbered
through a French window in clumsy haste, her brows contracted against
the light.

'Well?' she said, delivering the word like a spear-thrust, with the full
weight of a body behind it.

'I've brought Harvey back at last,' I replied. 'Here he is.'

But it was at me she looked, not at the dog who had cast himself at her
feet--looked as though she would have fished my soul out of my breast on
the instant.

'Wha--what did you think of him? What did you make of him?' she
panted. I was too taken aback for the moment to reply. Her voice broke
as she stooped to the dog at her knees. 'O Harvey, Harvey! You utterly
worthless old devil!' she cried, and the dog cringed and abased himself
in servility that one could scarcely bear to look upon. I made to go.

'Oh, but please, you mustn't!' She tugged at the car's side. 'Wouldn't
you like some flowers or some orchids? We've really splendid orchids,
and'--she clasped her hands--'there are Japanese goldfish--real
Japanese goldfish, with four tails. If you don't care for 'em, perhaps
your friends or somebody--oh, please!'

Harvey had recovered himself, and I realised that this woman beyond the
decencies was fawning on me as the dog had fawned on her.

'Certainly,' I said, ashamed to meet her eye. 'I'm lunching at
Mittleham, but--'

'There's plenty of time,' she entreated. 'What do you think of

Harvey?'

'He's a queer beast,' I said, getting out. 'He does nothing but stare at me.'

'Does he stare at you all the time he's with you?'

'Always. He's doing it now. Look!'

We had halted. Harvey had sat down, and was staring from one to the other with a weaving motion of the head.

'He'll do that all day,' I said. 'What is it, Harvey?'

'Yes, what is it, Harvey?' she echoed. The dog's throat twitched, his body stiffened and shook as though he were going to have a fit. Then he came back with a visible wrench to his unwinking watch.

'Always so?' she whispered.

'Always,' I replied, and told her something of his life with me. She nodded once or twice, and in the end led me into the house.

There were unaging pitch-pine doors of Gothic design in it; there were inlaid marble mantel-pieces and cut-steel fenders; there were stupendous wall-papers, and octagonal, medallioned Wedgwood what-nots, and black-and-gilt Austrian images holding candelabra, with every other refinement that Art had achieved or wealth had bought between 1851 and 1878. And everything reeked of varnish.

'Now!' she opened a baize door, and pointed down a long corridor flanked with more Gothic doors. 'This was where we used to--to patch 'em up. You've heard of us. Mrs. Godfrey told you in the garden the day I got Harvey given me. I--she drew in her breath--'I live here by myself, and I have a very large income. Come back, Harvey.'

He had tiptoed down the corridor, as rigid as ever, and was sitting outside one of the shut doors. 'Look here!' she said, and planted herself squarely in front of me. 'I tell you this because you--you've patched up Harvey, too. Now, I want you to remember that my name is Moira. Mother calls me Marjorie because it's more refined; but my real name is Moira, and I am in my thirty-fourth year.'

'Very good,' I said. 'I'll remember all that.'

'Thank you.' Then with a sudden swoop into the humility of an abashed boy--'Sorry if I haven't said the proper things. You see--there's Harvey looking at us again. Oh, I want to say--if ever you want anything in the way of orchids or goldfish or--or anything else that would be

useful to you, you've only to come to me for it. Under the will I'm perfectly independent, and we're a long-lived family, worse luck!' She looked at me, and her face worked like glass behind driven flame. 'I may reasonably expect to live another fifty years,' she said.

'Thank you, Miss Sichliffe,' I replied. 'If I want anything, you may be sure I'll come to you for it.' She nodded. 'Now I must get over to Mittleham,' I said.

'Mr. Attley will ask you all about this.' For the first time she laughed aloud. 'I'm afraid I frightened him nearly out of the county. I didn't think, of course. But I dare say he knows by this time he was wrong. Say good-bye to Harvey.'

'Good-bye, old man,' I said. 'Give me a farewell stare, so we shall know each other when we meet again.'

The dog looked up, then moved slowly toward me, and stood, head bowed to the floor, shaking in every muscle as I patted him; and when I turned, I saw him crawl back to her feet.

That was not a good preparation for the rampant boy-and-girl-dominated lunch at Mittleham, which, as usual, I found in possession of everybody except the owner.

'But what did the dromedary say when you brought her beast back?' Attley demanded.

'The usual polite things,' I replied. 'I'm posing as the nice doggy friend nowadays.'

'I don't envy you. She's never darkened my doors, thank goodness, since I left Harvey at your place. I suppose she'll run about the county now swearing you cured him. That's a woman's idea of gratitude.' Attley seemed rather hurt, and Mrs. Godfrey laughed.

'That proves you were right about Miss Sichliffe, Ella,' I said. 'She had no designs on anybody.'

'I'm always right in these matters. But didn't she even offer you a goldfish?'

'Not a thing,' said I. 'You know what an old maid's like where her precious dog's concerned.' And though I have tried vainly to lie to Ella Godfrey for many years, I believe that in this case I succeeded.

When I turned into our drive that evening, Leggatt observed half aloud:

'I'm glad Zvengali's back where he belongs. It's time our Mike had a

look in.'

Sure enough, there was Malachi back again in spirit as well as flesh, but still with that odd air of expectation he had picked up from Harvey.

* * * * *

It was in January that Attley wrote me that Mrs. Godfrey, wintering in Madeira with Milly, her unmarried daughter, had been attacked with something like enteric; that the hotel, anxious for its good name, had thrust them both out into a cottage annexe; that he was off with a nurse, and that I was not to leave England till I heard from him again. In a week he wired that Milly was down as well, and that I must bring out two more nurses, with suitable delicacies.

Within seventeen hours I had got them all aboard the Cape boat, and had seen the women safely collapsed into sea-sickness. The next few weeks were for me, as for the invalids, a low delirium, clouded with fantastic memories of Portuguese officials trying to tax calves'-foot jelly; voluble doctors insisting that true typhoid was unknown in the island; nurses who had to be exercised, taken out of themselves, and returned on the tick of change of guard; night slides down glassy, cobbled streets, smelling of sewage and flowers, between walls whose every stone and patch Attley and I knew; vigils in stucco verandahs, watching the curve and descent of great stars or drawing auguries from the break of dawn; insane interludes of gambling at the local Casino, where we won heaps of unconsoling silver; blasts of steamers arriving and departing in the roads; help offered by total strangers, grabbed at or thrust aside; the long nightmare crumbling back into sanity one forenoon under a vine-covered trellis, where Attley sat hugging a nurse, while the others danced a noiseless, neat-footed breakdown never learned at the Middlesex Hospital. At last, as the tension came out all over us in aches and tingles that we put down to the country wine, a vision of Mrs. Godfrey, her grey hair turned to spun-glass, but her eyes triumphant over the shadow of retreating death beneath them, with Milly, enormously grown, and clutching life back to her young breast, both stretched out on cane chairs, clamouring for food.

In this ungirt hour there imported himself into our life a youngish-looking middle-aged man of the name of Shend, with a blurred face and deprecating eyes. He said he had gambled with me at the Casino, which was no recommendation, and I remember that he twice gave me a basket of champagne and liqueur brandy for the invalids, which a sailor in a red-tasselled cap carried up to the cottage for me at 3 A.M. He turned out to be the son of some merchant prince in the oil and colour line, and the owner of a four-hundred-ton steam yacht, into which, at his gentle insistence, we later shifted our camp, staff, and equipage, Milly weeping with delight to escape from the horrible cottage. There we lay off Funchal for weeks, while Shend did miracles of luxury and

attendance through deputies, and never once asked how his guests were enjoying themselves. Indeed, for several days at a time we would see nothing of him. He was, he said, subject to malaria. Giving as they do with both hands, I knew that Attley and Mrs. Godfrey could take nobly; but I never met a man who so nobly gave and so nobly received thanks as Shend did.

'Tell us why you have been so unbelievably kind to us gipsies,' Mrs. Godfrey said to him one day on deck.

He looked up from a diagram of some Thames-mouth shoals which he was explaining to me, and answered with his gentle smile:

'I will. It's because it makes me happy--it makes me more than happy--to be with you. It makes me comfortable. You know how selfish men are? If a man feels comfortable all over with certain people, he'll bore them to death, just like a dog. You always make me feel as if pleasant things were going to happen to me.'

'Haven't any ever happened before?' Milly asked.

'This is the most pleasant thing that has happened to me in ever so many years,' he replied. 'I feel like the man in the Bible, "It's good for me to be here." Generally, I don't feel that it's good for me to be anywhere in particular.' Then, as one begging a favour. 'You'll let me come home with you--in the same boat, I mean? I'd take you back in this thing of mine, and that would save you packing your trunks, but she's too lively for spring work across the Bay.'

We booked our berths, and when the time came, he wafted us and ours aboard the Southampton mail-boat with the pomp of plenipotentiaries and the precision of the Navy. Then he dismissed his yacht, and became an inconspicuous passenger in a cabin opposite to mine, on the port side.

We ran at once into early British spring weather, followed by sou'west gales. Mrs. Godfrey, Milly, and the nurses disappeared. Attley stood it out, visibly yellowing, till the next meal, and followed suit, and Shend and I had the little table all to ourselves. I found him even more attractive when the women were away. The natural sweetness of the man, his voice, and bearing all fascinated me, and his knowledge of practical seamanship (he held an extra master's certificate) was a real joy. We sat long in the empty saloon and longer in the smoking-room, making dashes downstairs over slippery decks at the eleventh hour.

It was on Friday night, just as I was going to bed, that he came into my cabin, after cleaning his teeth, which he did half a dozen times a day.

'I say,' he began hurriedly, 'do you mind if I come in here for a little? I'm a bit edgy.' I must have shown surprise. 'I'm ever so much

better about liquor than I used to be, but--it's the whisky in the suitcase that throws me. For God's sake, old man, don't go back on me to-night! Look at my hands!"

They were fairly jumping at the wrists. He sat down on a trunk that had slid out with the roll. We had reduced speed, and were surging in confused seas that pounded on the black port-glasses. The night promised to be a pleasant one!

'You understand, of course, don't you?' he chattered.

'Oh yes,' I said cheerily; 'but how about--'

'No, no; on no account the doctor. 'Tell a doctor, tell the whole ship. Besides, I've only got a touch of 'em. You'd never have guessed it, would you? The tooth-wash does the trick. I'll give you the prescription.'

I'll send a note to the doctor for a prescription, shall I?' I suggested.

'Right! I put myself unreservedly in your hands. 'Fact is, I always did. I said to myself--'sure I don't bore you?--the minute I saw you, I said, "Thou art the man." He repeated the phrase as he picked at his knees. 'All the same, you can take it from me that the ewe-lamb business is a rotten bad one. I don't care how unfaithful the shepherd may be. Drunk or sober, 't isn't cricket.'

A surge of the trunk threw him across the cabin as the steward answered my bell. I wrote my requisition to the doctor while Shend was struggling to his feet.

'What's wrong?' he began. 'Oh, I know. We're slowing for soundings off Ushant. It's about time, too. You'd better ship the dead-lights when you come back, Matchem. It'll save you waking us later. This sea's going to get up when the tide turns. That'll show you,' he said as the man left, 'that I am to be trusted. You--you'll stop me if I say anything I shouldn't, won't you?'

'Talk away,' I replied, 'if it makes you feel better.'

'That's it; you've hit it exactly. You always make me feel better. I can rely on you. It's awkward soundings but you'll see me through it. We'll defeat him yet.... I may be an utterly worthless devil, but I'm not a brawler.... I told him so at breakfast. I said, "Doctor, I detest brawling, but if ever you allow that girl to be insulted again as Clements insulted her, I will break your neck with my own hands." You think I was right?'

'Absolutely,' I agreed.

'Then we needn't discuss the matter any further. That man was a murderer in intention--outside the law, you understand, as it was then. They've changed it since--but he never deceived me. I told him so. I said to him at the time, "I don't know what price you're going to put on my head, but if ever you allow Clements to insult her again, you'll never live to claim it."' "

'And what did he do?' I asked, to carry on the conversation, for Matchem entered with the bromide.

'Oh, crumpled up at once. 'Lead still going, Matchem?'

'I 'aven't 'eard,' said that faithful servant of the Union-Castle Company.

'Quite right. Never alarm the passengers. Ship the dead-light, will you?' Matchem shipped it, for we were rolling very heavily. There were tramlings and gull-like cries from on deck. Shend looked at me with a mariner's eye.

'That's nothing,' he said protectingly.

'Oh, it's all right for you,' I said, jumping at the idea. 'I haven't an extra master's certificate. I'm only a passenger. I confess it funks me.'

Instantly his whole bearing changed to answer the appeal.

'My dear fellow, it's as simple as houses. We're hunting for sixty-five fathom water. Anything short of sixty, with a sou'west wind means--but I'll get my Channel Pilot out of my cabin and give you the general idea. I'm only too grateful to do anything to put your mind at ease.'

And so, perhaps, for another hour--he declined the drink--Channel Pilot in hand, he navigated us round Ushant, and at my request up-channel to Southampton, light by light, with explanations and reminiscences. I professed myself soothed at last, and suggested bed.

'In a second,' said he. 'Now, you wouldn't think, would you'--he glanced off the book toward my wildly swaying dressing-gown on the door--'that I've been seeing things for the last half-hour? 'Fact is, I'm just on the edge of 'em, skating on thin ice round the corner--nor'east as near as nothing--where that dog's looking at me.'

'What's the dog like?' I asked.

'Ah, that is comforting of you! Most men walk through 'em to show me

they aren't real. As if I didn't know! But _you're_ different. Anybody could see that with half an eye.' He stiffened and pointed. 'Damn it all! The dog sees it too with half an--Why, he knows you! Knows you perfectly. D'you know _him_?'

'How can I tell if he isn't real?' I insisted.

'But you can! _You're_ all right. I saw that from the first. Don't go back on me now or I shall go to pieces like the _Drummond Castle_. I beg your pardon, old man; but, you see, you _do_ know the dog. I'll prove it. What's that dog doing? Come on! _You_ know.' A tremor shook him, and he put his hand on my knee, and whispered with great meaning: 'I'll letter or halve it with you. There! You begin.'

'S,' said I to humour him, for a dog would most likely be standing or sitting, or may be scratching or sniffing or staring.

'Q,' he went on, and I could feel the heat of his shaking hand.

'U,' said I. There was no other letter possible; but I was shaking too.

'I.'

'N.'

'T-i-n-g,' he ran out. 'There! That proves it. I knew you knew him. You don't know what a relief that is. Between ourselves, old man, he--he's been turning up lately a--a damn sight more often than I cared for. And a squinting dog--a dog that squints! I mean that's a bit _too_ much. Eh? What?' He gulped and half rose, and I thought that the full tide of delirium would be on him in another sentence.

'Not a bit of it,' I said as a last chance, with my hand over the bellpush. 'Why, you've just proved that I know him; so there are two of us in the game, anyhow.'

'By Jove! that _is_ an idea! Of course there are. I knew you'd see me through. We'll defeat them yet. Hi, pup!... He's gone. Absolutely disappeared!' He sighed with relief, and I caught the lucky moment.

'Good business! I expect he only came to have a look at me,' I said. 'Now, get this drink down and turn in to the lower bunk.'

He obeyed, protesting that he could not inconvenience me, and in the midst of apologies sank into a dead sleep. I expected a wakeful night, having a certain amount to think over; but no sooner had I scrambled into the top bunk than sleep came on me like a wave from the other side of the world.

In the morning there were apologies, which we got over at breakfast before our party were about.

'I suppose--after this--well, I don't blame you. I'm rather a lonely chap, though.' His eyes lifted dog-like across the table.

'Shend,' I replied, 'I'm not running a Sunday school. You're coming home with me in my car as soon as we land.'

'That is kind of you--kinder than you think.'

'That's because you're a little jumpy still. Now, I don't want to mix up in your private affairs--'

'But I'd like you to,' he interrupted.

'Then, would you mind telling me the Christian name of a girl who was insulted by a man called Clements?'

'Moirá,' he whispered; and just then Mrs. Godfrey and Milly came to table with their shore-going hats on.

We did not tie up till noon, but the faithful Leggatt had intrigued his way down to the dock-edge, and beside him sat Malachi, wearing his collar of gold, or Leggatt makes it look so, as eloquent as Demosthenes. Shend flinched a little when he saw him. We packed Mrs. Godfrey and Milly into Attley's car--they were going with him to Mittleham, of course--and drew clear across the railway lines to find England all lit and perfumed for spring. Shend sighed with happiness.

'D'you know,' he said, 'if--if you'd chucked me--I should have gone down to my cabin after breakfast and cut my throat. And now--it's like a dream--a good dream, you know.'

We lunched with the other three at Romsey. Then I sat in front for a little while to talk to my Malachi. When I looked back, Shend was solidly asleep, and stayed so for the next two hours, while Leggatt chased Attley's fat Daimler along the green-speckled hedges. He woke up when we said good-bye at Mittleham, with promises to meet again very soon.

'And I hope,' said Mrs. Godfrey, 'that everything pleasant will happen to you.'

'Heaps and heaps--all at once,' cried long, weak Milly, waving her wet handkerchief.

'I've just got to look in at a house near here for a minute to inquire about a dog,' I said, 'and then we will go home.'

'I used to know this part of the world,' he replied, and said no more till Leggatt shot past the lodge at the Sichliffes's gate. Then I heard him gasp.

Miss Sichliffe, in a green waterproof, an orange jersey, and a pinkish leather hat, was working on a bulb-border. She straightened herself as the car stopped, and breathed hard. Shend got out and walked towards her. They shook hands, turned round together, and went into the house. Then the dog Harvey pranced out corkily from under the lee of a bench. Malachi, with one joyous swoop, fell on him as an enemy and an equal. Harvey, for his part, freed from all burden whatsoever except the obvious duty of a man-dog on his own ground, met Malachi without reserve or remorse, and with six months' additional growth to come and go on.

'Don't check 'em!' cried Leggatt, dancing round the flurry. 'They've both been saving up for each other all this time. It'll do 'em worlds of good.'

'Leggatt,' I said, 'will you take Mr. Shend's bag and suitcase up to the house and put them down just inside the door? Then we will go on.'

So I enjoyed the finish alone. It was a dead heat, and they licked each other's jaws in amity till Harvey, one imploring eye on me, leaped into the front seat, and Malachi backed his appeal. It was theft, but I took him, and we talked all the way home of r-rats and r-rabbits and bones and baths and the other basic facts of life. That evening after dinner they slept before the fire, with their warm chins across the hollows of my ankles--to each chin an ankle--till I kicked them upstairs to bed.

* * * * *

I was not at Mittleham when she came over to announce her engagement, but I heard of it when Mrs. Godfrey and Attley came, forty miles an hour, over to me, and Mrs. Godfrey called me names of the worst for suppression of information.

'As long as it wasn't me, I don't care,' said Attley.

'I believe you knew it all along,' Mrs. Godfrey repeated. 'Else what made you drive that man literally into her arms?'

'To ask after the dog Harvey,' I replied.

'Then, what's the beast doing here?' Attley demanded, for Malachi and the dog Harvey were deep in a council of the family with Bettina, who was being out-argued.

'Oh, Harvey seemed to think himself de trop where he was,' I said.

'And she hasn't sent after him. You'd better save Bettina before they kill her.'

'There's been enough lying about that dog,' said Mrs. Godfrey to me. 'If he wasn't born in lies, he was baptized in 'em. D'you know why she called him Harvey? It only occurred to me in those dreadful days when I was ill, and one can't keep from thinking, and thinks everything. D'you know your Boswell? What did Johnson say about Hervey--with an e?'

'Oh, _that's_ it, is it?' I cried incautiously. 'That was why I ought to have verified my quotations. The spelling defeated me. Wait a moment, and it will come back. Johnson said: "He was a vicious man,"' I began.

"But very kind to me," Mrs. Godfrey prompted. Then, both together, "If you call a dog Hervey, I shall love him."

'So you _were_ mixed up in it. At any rate, you had your suspicions from the first? Tell me,' she said.

'Ella,' I said, 'I don't know anything rational or reasonable about any of it. It was all--all woman-work, and it scared me horribly.'

'Why?' she asked.

That was six years ago. I have written this tale to let her know--wherever she may be.

EUGENICALLY SPEAKING

A One-Act Play

By Edward Goodman

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(from: The Project Gutenberg EBook of Washington Square Plays, Vol XX, by Various
"Eugenically Speaking" was produced by the Washington Square Players,
under the direction of Philip Moeller, as part of their first program at
the Bandbox Theatre, New York City, beginning February 19, 1915.

In the cast, in the order of their appearance, were the following:

UNA BRAITHEWAITE. Florence Enright
GEORGE COXEY. Karl Karsten
MR. BRAITHEWAITE. George C. Somnes
JARVIS a manservant Ralph Roeder

The scene was designed by Engelbert Gminska and Miss Enright's costume
by Mrs. Edward Flammer.

"Eugenically Speaking" was subsequently revived by the Washington Square
Players at the Comedy Theatre, New York City, beginning August 30, 1916.
In this production Arthur Hohl played the part of George Coxey; Robert
Strange, Wm. Braithewaite; and Spalding Hall, Jarvis.

CHARACTERS

UNA. A girl
GEORGE COXEY. A conductor
MR. BRAITHEWAITE. A financier
JARVIS. A butler

TIME: Between to-day and to-morrow.

SCENE: A room in the Braithewaite mansion, richly but tastefully
furnished. Among these furnishings it is necessary for the play to note,
besides the door at the back, only the table that stands a little to the
right of the centre of the room, with a statue on it, and three chairs
which stand, one to the right, one to the left, and one in the middle.
It is a winter afternoon, and the room is illuminated by invisible
lights.

Enter UNA, followed by GEORGE COXEY. UNA is a charming, fashionable

girl of twenty with a suave blend of will and poise. GEORGE COXEY is a handsome, well-built, magnetic-looking youth of about twenty-five. He is dressed in the garb of a street-car conductor and carries the cap in his hand. Although somewhat inconvenienced and preoccupied with the novelty of his surroundings and his situation, he remains, in the main, in excellent self-possession, an occasional twinkle in his eye showing that he is even quietly alive to a certain humor in the adventure. Above all, his attitude is that rare one, which we like to feel typical of American youth, of facing an unusual situation firmly, and seeing and grasping its possibilities quickly.

He stands near the door, waiting, examining the room and warming his hands, while UNA goes to the bell and rings it and then proceeds to the mirror to primp a little. When she is finished she turns and notices him.

UNA. Why, my dear man, sit down. [She points to a chair at the right.]

GEORGE. Thanks, after you.

UNA [laughs]. Oh! Excuse me. I forgot. You're a car conductor. Naturally you're polite.

GEORGE. Not naturally, Miss. But I've learned.

UNA. An apt pupil, too. Let me teach you then that the ruder you are to a woman, the more she'll hate you--or love you. [She goes up to him and invites him with a gesture.] Sit down.

[GEORGE remains immobile.] The polite are not only bourgeois, they're boring.

GEORGE. When I know I'm right, I stick to it.

UNA. But you must grow tired of standing.

GEORGE. If I did, I'd lose my job.

UNA. You have already. Sit down.

GEORGE [firmly]. After you.

UNA [taking the chair, centre, and sitting on it]. You're splendid. Now!

[GEORGE sits in the offered chair a little stiffly.]

UNA. Isn't that better than ringing up fares?

GEORGE [smiling at his attempt at a pun]. Fairly.

UNA [rising, perturbed]. No! You mustn't do that. That's vulgar.

GEORGE [rising in alarm]. What have I done?

UNA [vexed again]. Sit down. You mustn't jump up when I do. [He remains standing. Vexed but smiling she sits.] Well, there! [He sits down.] You punned! You mustn't. We all like puns, but it's good form to call them bad taste.

[Enter JARVIS the Butler.]

JARVIS [starts slightly at perceiving the situation, but controls himself]. Did you ring for me, Miss?

UNA. Yes. Please tell my father that I'd like to see him at once.

[JARVIS goes out.]

UNA. Do you know the reason that you are here?

GEORGE. The hundred dollars you gave me.

UNA. No----

GEORGE. Yes. I wouldn't have left my job if you hadn't given me that.

UNA. I suppose not. But I mean, do you know why I brought you here?

GEORGE. I'm waiting to see.

UNA [enthusiastically]. I wonder if you'll like it.

GEORGE. Your father?

UNA. No. Dad's a dear. That is, he is when he sees you mean business.

[Enter MR. BRAITHEWAITE. He is a well-preserved man near sixty, almost always completely master of himself. On seeing COXEY he, too, gives a little start and then controls himself.]

BRAITHEWAITE. Una, dear?

UNA [jumping up in excitement]. Oh, Daddy! I'm so glad you were in. [To GEORGE who has risen, too.] Keep your seat. Draw up a chair, Dad--I've done it.

BRAITHEWAITE. Done what?

UNA [bringing up a chair and placing it to her right]. Do sit down, Dad. He's so delicious. He won't sit down till we do--and you know how much they have to stand.

BRAITHEWAITE [looks at GEORGE and UNA and then sits in the chair allotted to him, whereupon UNA sits in hers and then GEORGE sits down]. Now, dear, what is it you have done?

UNA. Selected a husband.

[GEORGE moves a little uneasily. BRAITHEWAITE looks at GEORGE and then speaks to UNA.]

BRAITHEWAITE. You mean?

UNA [pointing to GEORGE]. Him! [GEORGE rises in discomfiture.] Do sit down. We're all sitting now, you see. [GEORGE brings himself to sit down again.]

BRAITHEWAITE. But, my dear----

UNA. Now don't say a word until you hear the whole story. You read that article by Shaw in the Metropolitan, didn't you? I did. You remember what he wrote? "The best eugenic guide is the sex attraction--the Voice of Nature." He thinks the trouble is at present that we dare not marry out of our own sphere. But I'll show you exactly what he says. [She fusses in her handbag and pulls out a sheet of a magazine which she unfolds as she says:] I always carry the article with me. It's so stimulating.

BRAITHEWAITE [protesting]. You're not going to read me a whole Shaw article, are you? It's five o'clock now and we've a dinner date at eight, dear.

UNA. It's a Shaw article, not a Shaw preface. However, I'll only read the passage I've marked. Listen. [She reads.] "I do not believe you will ever have any improvement in the human race until you greatly widen the area of possible sexual selection; until you make it as wide as the numbers of the community make it. Just consider what occurs at the present time. I walk down Oxford Street, let me say, as a young man." He might just as well have said, "young woman," you know.

BRAITHEWAITE. And?

UNA [continues reading], "I see a woman who takes my fancy." With me it would be a man, of course.

BRAITHEWAITE. For your purpose, of course.

UNA [continuing again]. "I fall in love with her. It would seem very sensible in an intelligent community that I should take off my hat and say to this lady: 'Will you excuse me; but you attract me strongly, and if you are not already engaged, would you mind taking my name and address and considering whether you would care to marry me?' [BRAITHEWAITE looks uncomfortably at GEORGE who looks uncomfortable, though amused, himself.] Now I have no such chance at present."

BRAITHEWAITE. Exactly. You see, he admits it.

UNA. Yes, but why shouldn't I have the chance? That set me thinking. I decided he was right. I am intelligent, am I not?

BRAITHEWAITE. I refuse to commit myself, dear, until I hear all your story.

UNA. Well, I decided I'd make the chance. You see, I--I've been led to think recently that I ought to be getting married.

BRAITHEWAITE. May I ask why?

UNA. Yes, dear, but I'd rather not answer.

BRAITHEWAITE. I beg pardon.

UNA. And when I looked about me for the possibilities in my own set, I--[she makes a face]--well, I wasn't attracted.

BRAITHEWAITE. I admit, in society, as a rule, the women grow stronger and the men weaker.

UNA. Exactly. And I knew you wanted to be a proud grandfather.

BRAITHEWAITE. You're mistaken, dear. I hadn't given the subject any thought; so I had no desires.

UNA. Well, I have... [BRAITHEWAITE slightly shows that he is perhaps shocked. UNA notices this and continues in explanation] given the subject a good deal of thought. I've spent days buying second-hand clothing to give away at the missions and lodging houses in order to have a look.

BRAITHEWAITE. At least there was charity in that.

UNA. Yes. You see I didn't want charity to have to begin at my home. Self-preservation is the first law of Nature.

BRAITHEWAITE. And self-propagation, I suppose, the second.

UNA. Well--the missions were no good. They were all so starved and pinched-looking there I couldn't tell what they'd be like if they got proper nourishment. And I didn't want to take a chance. So I went to some coal yards.

BRAITHEWAITE. To find the devil not so black as painted?

UNA [with a grimace]. Blacker! I couldn't see what they looked like. Of course if I could have asked them to wash their faces.

BRAITHEWAITE [looking at GEORGE]. Considering what you have done, I don't see----

UNA. I did ask one, but he made some vulgar remark about black dirt and red paint. So I left him.

BRAITHEWAITE. And then?

UNA. I spent all to-day riding up and down town in street cars. It's very fascinating, Dad. All you can see for a nickel! I never realized what a public benefactor you were.

BRAITHEWAITE [modestly]. Oh, I am amply repaid.

UNA [in explanation to GEORGE]. Dad's the president of your traction company, you know. [GEORGE rises in fright.] Oh, that's all right. I've lost you your job, but I'll get you a better one as I promised. Don't be afraid of Dad--in the parlor. Sit down.

BRAITHEWAITE [to GEORGE]. You might as well make yourself physically comfortable, you know. There's no telling how my daughter may make us feel in other ways.

[GEORGE sits down again, regaining his composure a little.]

BRAITHEWAITE [to UNA]. And so to-day you investigated travelling in street cars?

UNA. Yes. "Joy-riding," you know. Then I saw him--and decided. I knew he wouldn't dare to propose to me--under existing conditions.

BRAITHEWAITE. So you asked him to marry you?

UNA. Certainly not. I've too much consideration for you, dear.

BRAITHEWAITE. But I thought you said----?

UNA. I decided to bring him home to get your consent first.

[BRAITHEWAITE starts to say something.] I knew you'd approve when you

saw him. But I wanted to be sure I hadn't overlooked anything. And if I had, I didn't want to have raised his hopes for nothing. [To GEORGE.] Would you mind standing a moment, now, until Dad looks you over?

[GEORGE fidgets a little in embarrassment.]

BRAITHEWAITE. My dear, do you think the gentleman----?

UNA. "Gentleman!" Oh, yes, I forgot. I needn't have been so clumsy. [She rises. GEORGE rises automatically. She continues to GEORGE.] I apologize.

BRAITHEWAITE [also rising and moving his chair aside]. I fear you have been too rude.

UNA. So do I. I've never even introduced you. Father, this is--this is---- [To GEORGE.] By the way--I forgot to ask--what is your name?

GEORGE. Coxey, Miss.

UNA [sounding it]. Coxey. What's the first name? I can't call my husband "Coxey," you know.

GEORGE. George, Miss.

UNA [triumphantly]. George! There's a fine virile name for you. George Coxey! How strong that sounds! One of those names that would go equally well in the blue book or the police blotter.

GEORGE. I never----

UNA. Don't disclaim. I know you've never been arrested. One can see your goodness in your face.

BRAITHEWAITE [reprovingly]. Many of the best people go to jail now, dear.

UNA. I know. But he's not rich and thank heaven he's not a fanatic. Isn't he good-looking? And I'm sure he's strong. See those hands of his--a little rough, of course, but I like that, and so firm and, for his job, wonderfully clean. Don't hide them, George. They attracted me from the start.

BRAITHEWAITE. How did you come here with my daughter at all, sir?

UNA [quickly]. I got off with him at the car barn when he finished his run and asked him.

BRAITHEWAITE. Didn't you know you would lose your job by leaving that

way?

GEORGE [with a suppressed smile]. Yes, sir.

BRAITHEWAITE. And you came at any rate?

GEORGE. You see, sir, she gave me----

UNA [interrupting hurriedly]. A beseeching look. Just one. I didn't use more than was necessary. [Pointedly to GEORGE.] You see, George, I have learnt economy from father. He hates me to be extravagant.

BRAITHEWAITE. That, my dear, is the chief objection I have to this episode--it's extravagance.

UNA. Please don't call it an "episode," father.

BRAITHEWAITE. You must admit it's--rather unusual.

UNA. In England, lords always marry chorus girls.

BRAITHEWAITE. But he is a conductor.

GEORGE [angry]. Yes. And conductors are----

UNA. As hard working as chorus girls--only. Don't be snobbish, George. Of course a conductor is more unusual, I admit. I can't help that though---- [To her father.] You shouldn't have called me "Una," if you didn't want me to be unique.

BRAITHEWAITE [reminiscently]. That was most unfortunate--most. It was your mother's idea. She believed in symbols--and in a small family.

UNA. Oh! Was that why----? Well, no matter. I've always thought it meant individuality and I've done my best to live up to it. [She looks at the statue.] That statue ought to be on the other side of the room.

BRAITHEWAITE. I'll have some of the men move it to-morrow.

UNA. I'd like to see the effect now.

BRAITHEWAITE [slightly annoyed at this seeming irrelevance]. I wish I could teach you concentration. I'm not strong enough to move it myself, dear, and----

GEORGE. Can I?

BRAITHEWAITE. Why--

UNA. Oh! If you would!

[GEORGE goes over to it and then hesitates what to do with his cap which he has in his hand.]

UNA. I'll take that.

GEORGE [giving it to her]. Thanks. [He bends and lifts the statue without effort, while UNA watches him admiringly, fingering his cap. When he reaches the other side of the room he stops, waveringly, awaiting instructions.]

UNA [talking as GEORGE waits]. Look at him. He's as fine as the statue, isn't he? And you know what you think of that. See the strength he has?

BRAITHEWAITE. Well----

UNA [to GEORGE]. Thank you so much. You may put it back again. That was all I wanted. [After GEORGE has.] I hope I didn't overtax you.

GEORGE. Oh, it ain't very heavy.

UNA [triumphantly to her father]. You see!

BRAITHEWAITE. But he uses "ain't."

UNA [imitating the reproof of her father]. Many of the best people use "ain't" now, dear.

BRAITHEWAITE. Not with his enunciation.

UNA. What was yours like when you were a railroad signalman?

BRAITHEWAITE. Una! The past of a public man should be private.

UNA. George has our children's future before him. All the others I know have only their parents' past behind. You could give him a job suitable for my husband. I'll make my husband suitable for the job.

BRAITHEWAITE. But you don't know him, my dear.

UNA. I don't know myself for that matter. If I don't like him, it's easy enough to go to Reno.

BRAITHEWAITE. Then you insist?

UNA. I'm tremendously eager. It's so unusual.

BRAITHEWAITE. I suppose I could sue Shaw.

UNA. Don't be silly. Sue an Englishman with German sympathies! Where's your neutrality?

BRAITHEWAITE [sinking into a chair]. Very well.

UNA [running up to GEORGE with delight]. Then it's settled, dear. We're going to marry.

GEORGE. Excuse me, Miss, we ain't.

BRAITHEWAITE [shocked]. "Ain't" again!

UNA [correcting]. "Aren't," dear--I mean, we are.

GEORGE. Not.

UNA [backing away]. Why not?

GEORGE. Because--I'm married already.

BRAITHEWAITE [rising]. What?

UNA. How annoying!

GEORGE. Married three years, and expecting a baby, Miss.

UNA [troubled]. Oh, please!

BRAITHEWAITE. You see what plunging means. I told you I believed in eugenic examinations first.

UNA [walking up and down, thinking]. Sh! Be quiet, father. Don't lose your head.

BRAITHEWAITE. Better than losing your heart.

UNA [laughing]. I have it. Of course. How stupid of me not to think. George.

GEORGE. Yes, Miss.

BRAITHEWAITE. Wouldn't you better call him "Mr. Coxey" now?

UNA [paying no heed to her father's remark]. George, you must divorce your wife.

GEORGE. Me? Why she's as good as gold and----

UNA. That's unfortunate. [Thinking.] Then I'll have to run away with you and let her get the divorce.

BRAITHEWAITE [now really shocked]. Una!

UNA [innocently]. What, Dad? Have you something better to suggest?

BRAITHEWAITE [fuming]. I can't permit it. I didn't mind the uncommon scandal of your marrying a car conductor, but I absolutely draw the line at common scandal.

UNA [a little bored]. Father, dear, why will you sometimes talk to me as though I were the Public Service Commission? There's going to be no scandal. You can keep it out of the newspapers.

GEORGE. Excuse me, but that don't make any difference. I don't want to get a divorce.

UNA. You don't? Why?

GEORGE [embarrassed]. Sounds like a song, I know, but--I love my wife.

UNA [in despair]. And you're the unusual man I'm to marry.

BRAITHEWAITE [with the contempt of a professional toward an amateur]. Stealing nickels doesn't develop the imagination.

UNA [desperately]. How can you love your wife? Some simple, economizing, prosaic, hausfrau who----

GEORGE [with spirit]. I don't know what you're saying, but you better be careful not to insult my wife. She's as good as you are and a rector's daughter.

UNA [dumbfounded]. What?

GEORGE. Yes. Daughter of one of the biggest sky-pilots in town. I met her at a settlement house. She put the question to me, too.

UNA [angry and doubting]. She----?

GEORGE. Sure. I've been through something like this before or I'd never been able to stand it so well.

UNA [as before]. Your wife----?

GEORGE. Had a good deal more pluck than you, though. Up and told her father she would marry me if he liked it or lumped it. He said he'd cut her. And he did. We never seen him since. But Naomi and I don't care.

That's her name; so you can see she's a Bible-poacher's daughter. Naomi and I've been happier than any people on earth. [Sternly.] She's taught me to stand when a lady was standing. That's why I wouldn't obey you. She's teaching me how to speak, too, and if I do say "ain't" and a lot of other things I oughtn't to when I'm excited, that ai--isn't her fault.

UNA. Then she--Naomi--has done everything unusual that I wanted to do, before I did?

GEORGE. Sure. You can't be unusual to-day. Too much brains been in the world before.

UNA. How is it I never heard this story, if her father's so well known?

GEORGE. D'you think your father's the only one can keep things out of the papers?

UNA [going over and weeping on her father's shoulder]. Oh! And I wanted to be unique.

BRAITHEWAITE [patting her]. There, there, dear. [To GEORGE.] You'd better go, now, Coxey.

GEORGE. And my job?

BRAITHEWAITE. I'll see you still keep it.

GEORGE. Thanks. I don't want to.

BRAITHEWAITE. No?

GEORGE. I want a better.

BRAITHEWAITE [putting his daughter aside]. Indeed! Pray what?

GEORGE [nonchalantly]. Superintendent or something. I leave it to you. You know more about what jobs there are than I do.

BRAITHEWAITE [controlling his anger]. And on what basis do you ask for a better job?

GEORGE. Naomi always said my chance would come and I could take it, if I had nerve and my eyes open. I think now's the time.

BRAITHEWAITE. Why?

GEORGE. Oh, this story about your daughter wouldn't look nice.

UNA. Oh!

BRAITHEWAITE. You forget the power your father-in-law and I have in the press.

GEORGE. No, I don't. But I remember that you can't keep me from spreading the news among your men. And I don't think----

BRAITHEWAITE [angry and advancing on him]. I could have you prosecuted for blackmail, sir. Have you no honor?

GEORGE. Sure. My honor says provide for your family. I've got the makings of a big man in me, Mr. Braithewaite. You can't chain me down with a poor man's morals.

BRAITHEWAITE. Well! I----

GEORGE. I'll work in any job you give me, too. I'm not asking for a cinch, only a chance. If she-- [pointing to UNA]--could teach me, Naomi can.

BRAITHEWAITE [after a pause]. Well, call around at my office in the morning.

GEORGE. Thanks. [He goes out.]

UNA [sitting to weep]. And I thought I could be unusual.

BRAITHEWAITE [patting her]. It's easy enough for Shaw, dear. He only writes it.

UNA [jumping up]. That's it. I'll write it. I'll write a play showing it's useless trying to escape the usual. [Running up to her father, GEORGE'S cap in her hands.] That will be unusual, won't it, Dad?

[Reenter GEORGE.]

GEORGE. Excuse me. I left my cap.

UNA [stretching it out to him without looking at him]. Here it is.

GEORGE [taking it]. Thanks. [Approaching her.] Buck up, Miss! You meant well.

UNA. I suppose I was too daring.

GEORGE. If you ask me, I think the trouble was you and that Shaw fellow wasn't daring enough. Marriage is a very particular sort of business. Now if you'd come up to me in the street and just asked me to---- [UNA

and BRAITHEWAITE look at GEORGE.] Well--I--I guess I'll go. But remember my tip next try, Miss.

[He goes out quickly, leaving UNA gradually grasping the idea and appreciating it, while her father's shock at what GEORGE has said is increased only by noticing his daughter's reception of the words.]

Curtain.

The Scent Of The Roses

by Mary E. Wilkins

From 'A New England Nun and Other Stories' (Harper & Brothers Publishers; New York: 1891)

Clarissa May's kitchen table was heaped with rose leaves. She was filling a large brown jar with layers of rose leaves and salt. She sprinkled in various spices too, then sniffed at the mixture daintily.

"Needs a little more cinnamon," she murmured.

"I wish you'd let the cinnamon alone," said a quick, sweet voice — "the cinnamon, and the rose leaves, and the salt, and the whole of it. I'd like to fling it into the fire."

"Don't talk so, Anne."

Anne stood in the door. She had just come down from her chamber. She was all ready to go to the picnic. She wore a broad-brimmed white straw hat, trimmed with fine pink flowers. Her ruffled, pink-flowered muslin gown fluttered crisply. She had pinned some pink rose-buds at her throat.

Anne and Clarissa were wonderfully alike, but the comparison would have been less derogatory for Clarissa had they been different. The resemblance brought the regret and humiliation of loss to her. Anne showed what Clarissa had been. She was the rose of this spring, her sister was one of last. If both of them had not been roses, the last year's flower would not have seemed so forlorn.

Clarissa's dull blond hair was brushed smoothly around her ears; Anne's was crinkled, and there were gold lights in it. Clarissa's skin was tintless and faintly lined; her sister's was warm and rosy and smooth. Clarissa's lips were thin; Anne's, full and red. One's figure showed angles; the other's, curves.

Clarissa, replying with her mild, deprecating voice, gazed admiringly at her sister. "You look real nice," she added.

"Sometimes I don't care whether I look nice or not. You do make me so out of patience!"

"Why, Anne, how you talk!"

"I don't care — you do. The idea of you shutting yourself up here, packing a mess of rose leaves into a jar! There isn't any sense in it."

"You know I'd rather stay at home."

"I don't care if you had. It's real nice for me going alone!"

"Ellen Pierson's going, isn't she?"

"I don't care if she is. Sometimes anybody'd like their own sister."

"I feel as if I was so much older."

"Older! You're not any older than dozens of girls that go all the time. You're not any older than Addie Leach or Abby Dutton; and I guess they'd be mad enough if anybody was to tell them they were too old to go."

"There's a lock of hair loose. Come round here and let me fix it."

"I don't care if it is," said Anne. But she stepped over to her sister, nevertheless, and Clarissa tucked up the golden lock carefully.

"P'rhaps I'll go next time," said she, appeasingly. "All is, I don't feel much like it, you know. People don't, I suppose, as they grow older."

"If they get up a party to go on West Mountain next week, will you go?"

"I'll see about it."

"I'll crimp your hair, and we'll fix over your blue dress."

"You'll be late, if you don't run along."

"Do I look all right?"

"Yes. I guess your hair'll stay up now."

After Anne had danced out with a crisp swish of muslin skirts, Clarissa went on with her work. She gathered up the soft rose leaves with her little thin veiny hands, and laid them in the jar with the greatest care.

She was soon interrupted again, however. "Oh, here you are!" said another voice. There was a contemptuous inflection in it. A tall, pale woman stood in the door. She held out a package of letters and a little white box stiffly in one hand.

"Oh, is it you, Aunt Joanna?"

"Yes, it's me. Why ain't you gone to the picnic?"

"I didn't feel like it."

"Didn't feel like it! I s'pose you felt more like putterin' over rose leaves. Clarissa May, I b'lieve you're jest about a fool."

"I don't know what you mean." Clarissa glanced at the letters, and her hands trembled.

"Yes, you do know what I mean. I came in the front way, an' went up-stairs. I wanted a

piece of brown cambric to line my sleeves, an' I thought I'd see if you hadn't got any. An' I found these things in your bottom bureau drawer, tucked away in the corner out of sight. I'd like to know why you've kept these old letters of Gilman Lane's so dreadful choice for all this time. They were wrote much as ten year ago, some of 'em."

"Aunt Joanna, give me those letters, please."

Clarissa trembled so she could scarcely speak. She felt as if all the light in the world was shining on her heart and showing it forth pitilessly, dispelling all its innocent shadows, which had seemed like guilty ones to her.

"I never see such a mess of nonsense in my life: all 'darling' an' 'dear.' It's enough to make anybody sick."

"Aunt Joanna, you haven't read them?"

"I guess I have read 'em, every line. I rather think I had a right to, as long as you're my sister's daughter. I s'pose he give you this breast-pin too, eh?"

"Aunt Joanna!"

"You needn't look so toppin'. When you've been doin' the way you have late years, never stirrin' out of the house except to meetin', an' actin' as if you'd give up the world, it's about time you was looked out after. Now I jest want to know if Gilman Lane give you the mitten, an' if that's what ails you?"

"Aunt Joanna, if you'll give me those letters —"

"If he has, he's a mean scamp, an' you're an awful fool, that's all I've got to say. Before I'd spend my whole life frettin' over one feller!"

"Aunt Joanna, you haven't any right to come here talking to me so."

"I guess I've got as good a right as anybody. I guess you won't find anybody that thinks much more of you, or is more interested in you, than me. Clarissa May, what I want to know is this — was you engaged to Gilman Lane?"

"No," said Clarissa, shortly. Then she turned her face obstinately away, and went to work on her rose leaves again, and would not speak another word. Her aunt questioned and reproved a while longer; then finding that she could get no further response, threw the letters and box down on the table, and left.

"If I had such soft letters lying around I'd burn 'em. I wouldn't leave 'em where folks could get 'em," said she. She turned around as she went out of the door. "I took that piece of brown cambric you had in your blue box, but I don' know as it's enough."

Clarissa had been intending to use the cambric herself, but she said not a word. After her aunt had gone she carried the letters up-stairs, and put them in their old place; then returned to her work.

She filled the jar quite full, then tidied up her kitchen. When the noon bells were ringing, her Aunt Joanna appeared again. She had a covered plate in her hand. She had brought over some warm dinner. Clarissa thanked her, and took it. Neither of the women alluded to the letters. But the niece looked after her aunt as she went out of the yard, and if she could have smitten her with a total loss of memory, she would have done it in her shame and distress.

Clarissa May knew every line of those old letters by heart. She knew whereabouts the lines stood on the pages, and the words in the lines. The few fond adjectives shone out like jewels among them. Now she thought them all over, she recounted one after another, and she said to herself, "Aunt Joanna has seen this, and this."

She set away the dinner untasted, put on her afternoon dress, and sat down with her sewing at the sitting-room window.

Anne found her there when she returned from the picnic. Anne had lost a little of her crisp daintiness of the morning. Her yellow hair was tumbled, her cheeks were hot, and her muslin dress was crumpled.

She sat down in the first chair with a sigh. "Oh," said she, "I'm glad to get in where it's cool! It's terrible out in the sun."

She looked around the room and at her sister approvingly. There were a certain patience and tranquillity about Clarissa, as she sat there sewing, which were cool and refreshing of themselves.

"You look real cool and comfortable," said Anne.

Clarissa had on an old-fashioned cotton gown of a mixed green-and-white pattern, which suited her soft faded face. This cool old summer-gown had served her mother before her. The daughter wore it with very little alteration in the straight full skirt and long prim body. It came out of its winter seclusion every June and seemed as if it would never be worn out. Clarissa regarded it with gratitude and thankfulness. She wanted Anne to have all the new summer dresses.

The sisters had their small income of one hundred and fifty dollars besides their house. This one hundred and fifty, eked out with a little sewing which Clarissa did, bought their food and clothes. Clarissa was a good manager, she made a little go so far, and she was very careful. There was a good deal of fine darning on the sitting-room carpet, but it took close scrutiny to see it among those faded, whitish-drab scrolls. The room was sweet with roses — living ones, which grew close to the open windows, and dead ones, which lay conserved with salt and spices in Clarissa's jars. She had converted every unused dish in the house into a receptacle for her rose leaves. Old china teapots stood about, and sugar bowls, and earthen jars, all exhaling spicy sweetness. They were in every room in the house. The amusements which life held for Clarissa seemed to be concentrated into this one gentle, erratic one of conserving rose leaves. And the amusement was of such long standing that it was almost like a duty to her. It is doubtful if she did not unconsciously think it wrong to let a rose leaf entirely perish, with all its

sweetness, while she could save it.

Years ago Gilman Lane had taught her how to make her first pot-pourri. "You ought to save all those roses," he had said one far-off summer day. "My Aunt Celia packs 'em in a jar with salt. I'll show you how."

The two had packed a little blue ginger jar with those old rose leaves. It stood on the shelf in the best parlor now, with the same ones in it.

Something stronger than any rose fragrance floated from it to Clarissa every time she entered the room. It was the fragrance of the old memory, which was better conserved than the rose leaves, and formed the lasting element of that first pot-pourri.

"I should think you'd fill up that jar new," Anne said often. She had no sense for that wonderful sweetness which her elder sister got from it.

Anne sat still for quite a while to-day. She did not talk as she usually did on a return from a merrymaking. She leaned her head back in her chair and stared at the opposite wall. There was a thoughtful look in her eyes, but her mouth was half smiling.

"Did you have a good time?" Clarissa asked, finally.

"Real good," Anne said. Then she hesitated. Her conscious smile grew more distinct; the red on her cheeks deepened. "You used to know Gilman Lane, didn't you, Clarissa?" she went on. "Why, what is the matter?"

"Nothing."

"Yes there is, too; you're awful white. Oh, Clarissa, don't you feel well?"

"Just as well as I ever did. Go on. What were you saying? Oh, about Gilman Lane."

"He was there, you know. He's got back from California, where he's been ten years. I didn't remember him. I was nothing but a little girl when he went away, anyhow. You used to know him, didn't you?"

"Yes, some."

"He's real handsome. Ellen introduced him to me; he's a sort of a cousin of hers, you know. She says he's splendid. He's older than I am. Why, didn't he go to school with you, Clarissa?"

"Yes, I believe he did."

"Why, it seems to me I remember his coming here sometimes, now I think of it. Didn't he used to?"

"Yes, he used to run in once in a while, I guess."

"I declare, I do remember it; but I never would have known him. He's splendid-looking."

Anne rose and took off her bonnet slowly. "How soon are you going to have tea, Clarissa?"

"We'll have it now, if you want it."

"Well, I don't know but we'd better, and get it out of the way." Anne stood laughing and fingering her bonnet strings. "To tell you the truth, I shouldn't wonder a bit if he was up here to-night. What is the matter? I know you're sick, Clarissa."

"No, I ain't. I guess I'd better go and get tea right away, then."

"It was a great joke on the other girls, you know. They were all teasing Ellen to introduce them, but he never looked at one of them. P'rhaps he won't come; but I shouldn't be a bit surprised."

Gilman Lane did come. His tall, muscular figure passed at dusk that night between the descendants of those old roses, up to the front-door porch, which was overgrown with them.

Anne answered his knock. She was aglow with modest delight. She looked up in his face with innocent admiration, which he was foolish not to see. No wonder that this man outshone the gentle village boys in her eyes! Gilman Lane had always been handsome. He was roughened and browned now by his California life, but that only accentuated his beauty to a country girl like Anne, who thought naturally of men as antipodes of flowers and women.

"Good-evening, Mr. Lane," said she, primly, her cheeks pink, her eyes shyly radiant. "Won't you walk in?"

Clarissa, up in her room, heard the knock, the opening door in response, and the firm, manly tread across the entry floor. Then she heard the murmur of voices in the best parlor. She sat on the edge of her little bed, listening. She was rigid; her hands were cold as ice.

In a half-hour or so she heard Anne's step on the stairs, and rose hurriedly. She was lighting a candle when her sister entered.

"Come down-stairs," Anne whispered, "he wants to see you."

"I can't. I was just going over to Aunt Joanna's."

"Come along."

"He doesn't want to see me."

"Yes, he does. He asked if you were at home. He said he used to know you, and he would like to see you. Come along down. If you don't, he'll think you don't want him to

come here, or something.”

Clarissa, following her imperious young sister down-stairs, went weakly, like an old woman; but Anne, in her joyful inpetuosity, never noticed it.

Lane rose as the two entered the parlor, and came across the room. He stumbled over a mat in his progress, and colored. He always managed his great frame a little clumsily.

“Well, how do you do, Clarissa?” said he. His voice was loud and hearty, with a little hesitation in it.

“How do you do, Gilman?” It was that freedom of old days lapsed into formality which is the most chilling of all.

They shook hands; then seated themselves. Clarissa was mute. She felt herself trembling, and wondered if he saw it. He did not; he was thinking to himself how very cool and stiff she was.

He tried to make some conversation. “You’re changed some, Clarissa, like all the rest of us,” he said, laughing awkwardly. There was a real flush on his brown face.

“I suppose I have,” said Clarissa, delicate and pale and outwardly composed. She smiled faintly in his direction.

“I guess you’re a little thinner than you used to be, and you haven’t got quite so much color. You’re well, aren’t you?”

There was an odd tone in his voice then that made Anne stare wonderingly at him.

“Very well, thank you,” Clarissa said.

“It was a good deal of a joke on me, but I declare when I first saw your sister to-day I thought it was you. She looks just the way you used to, doesn’t she?”

“Everybody says she does.”

“She does, sure enough. Why didn’t you go to the picnic to-day, Clarissa?”

“I don’t go out a great deal.”

“She’d rather stay in the house and fill old sugar bowls and jars with rose leaves,” Anne interrupted, with laughing pettishness. “I’ve been telling him about it.”

“I noticed it the minute I came into the house,” said Lane. “I wondered what it was that smelt so sweet.”

“Good reason why,” laughed Anne; “there are four things full of rose leaves in here, besides that blue ginger-jar on the shelf. They’re old in that, and don’t smell much. Why don’t you fill that one new, Clarissa?”

Lane looked at it gravely. "You ought to," said he; "that's a real pretty jar."

He had forgotten all about it. Whatever consciousness his heart held of those old days did not include that. His man's memory could not keep such small precious things.

"I thought I had about enough," said Clarissa, trying to speak easily. She looked over at the jar. For a moment it seemed more valuable to her than the man who had forgotten it and its storied sweetness. "It's all I've got left of anything," flashed through her mind. She wanted to seize it and cry over it. The forgetting and slighting this poor little jar made it harder for her to control herself. She could scarcely keep the tears back. But no one would have guessed it as she sat there pale and slender and prim.

She excused herself before long. She had to go over to her aunt Joanna's, she said, and pleaded some housewifely errand.

Joanna Emmons was a widow. She kept house with her daughter, also a widow, and two unmarried sons.

The family were all in bed, but the doors were never locked. Clarissa went straight in, and groped her way across the dusky kitchen to her aunt's bedroom door.

"Aunt Joanna!" she called, softly.

"Who is it?" said her aunt, sitting up in bed suddenly. She had not yet fallen asleep.

"It's Clarissa. Say, Aunt Joanna —"

"What are you over here for this time of night? Anne ain't sick, is she?"

"No. I wanted to see you a minute. Aunt Joanna, I wanted to tell you something, and I mean it. It's — about — those letters. If you ever tell Anne or anybody else anything about them, I'll go away somewhere where you'll never see me again, nor any one else either."

"Clarissa May, what do you mean?"

"What I say. You've got to promise me you won't."

"Tain't very likely I'm goin' all round town tellin' what a fool my sister's daughter made of herself."

"Aunt Joanna, you've got to promise me."

"Clarissa May, let go of my hands! You're crazy. You scare me 'most to death!"

"Promise."

"Well, I'll promise. I won't speak of 'em to a soul. There!"

"Then I'll go home. Don't you forget."

"Clarissa, come back here!" her aunt called after her, as she sped across the kitchen; but she was gone.

Anne was in the sitting-room when she reached home. "He went right after you did," said she, smiling consciously. "I don't think you treated him very well, Clarissa."

"I don't see why," said Clarissa, in a timid way.

"You acted as stiff as a poker. He thought it was awful funny that you didn't go out any more. You've got to go up West Mountain next week, anyhow."

Poor Clarissa went. She dragged herself wearily up those steep inclines, trying all the time to smile with the rest of the merry party. When they reached the summit her face was damp and pale with the heat; her lustreless hair clung close to her forehead. Anne was all rosy and glowing. Gilman Lane was at her side all day. Several times he tried to talk with Clarissa, but she avoided him, keeping close to some of the older young women, her mates.

"Gilman Lane is dead in love with Anne May," she overheard one say, with a furtive glance at her. Some of them remembered that years ago there had been a similar report in connection with the older sister.

"He's perfectly splendid," Anne said that night. "Why don't you say more to him, Clarissa? I'm afraid he'll think you don't want him to come."

So the next time that Gilman called, Clarissa made an effort to be cordial and talkative. She also remained in the room a little longer.

The summer passed, the autumn, and the winter; then the spring came again. Gilman Lane still called nearly every week at the May's.

People said, "Gilman Lane is going with Anne." Still he hardly fulfilled, in their opinions, all the conditions of courtship. He did not come regularly on Sunday evenings, neither did he remain late. Clarissa always saw him during a few minutes of every call. Anne insisted upon it.

"He acts just as if he thought you didn't want him to come and see me, if you don't," said she. "He said once he guessed my sister didn't like to have him calling so often."

Clarissa did not have a doubt as to how it would all end. She was certain that Gilman was fond of Anne. She thought also that her sister liked him, although she had her pretty, smart way about it, as she did about everything else, and laughed rather than sighed.

So Clarissa in her patient certainty overlooked it all. There was one thing which she dreaded: that was any allusion to the past. She had a constant fear lest she should

chance to see Gilman when her sister was not there. Several times she did not answer his knock when Anne was away.

Finally the roses were in blossom again. Clarissa's bushes were wonderful this year. The front yard was full of them. The vegetable garden behind the house had a broad walk edged with them, too.

Clarissa went at her old work again. She moved among the rose-trees, a prim, delicate figure, in her old green-and-white gown, and cut every loose rose carefully. She was bent, in her graceful parsimoniousness, on saving all that she could of the sweetness of the world; no matter how poorly she might live herself, her delight in this would not forsake her. She had lost love and youth and beauty, but she still got a little comfort out of her unselfishness and her roses. One is not entirely desolate while one can follow his instincts.

Anne laughed at her. "She's gone to filling jars for the neighbors this year," said Anne. "She filled one for Mrs. Lamson yesterday." She and Gilman were in the parlor that afternoon. Gilman laughed. Then he looked out of the window soberly. Clarissa was in the front yard tending her roses.

"It's real good of her," said he.

"Of course it is. Clarissa never does anything that isn't good, but she is so funny."

The next day Gilman came over with a great bunch of roses from his brother's garden. They were a different variety from any of Clarissa's, and very sweet.

The two sisters were in the garden behind the house. He hunted about until he found them. He held out the roses awkwardly to Clarissa.

"I thought maybe you'd like 'em," said he. "I guess they're different from yours."

"You haven't got any like them, have you, Clarissa?" said Anne, eagerly. "My! I never saw any so sweet."

Clarissa thanked him. "I haven't got any like them," said she. Her voice was a little unsteady.

Presently she carried the roses into the house. Gilman turned to Anne. "Look here," said he, "I want to ask you something."

Anne glanced at him. Then she turned her head so that he could barely see the pink curve of one cheek. She began pulling some roses busily. "I guess I'll pick some to put in the parlor vases," said she. "What is it you wanted to ask?"

"I want to know — I've been coming here pretty near a whole year, and I don't seem to be a bit nearer finding out anything than I was when I started. Now I'm going to ask you point-blank."

“Oh, Gilman!” Anne murmured. She moved a little farther from him, then she came back. She dropped some of her roses.

“I don't see as I can ask anybody but you. I can't see her alone a minute, no matter how hard I try. Oh, Anne, doesn't she ever tell you anything? Don't you know if she cares anything at all about me?”

“Who?”

“Why, Clarissa. Doesn't she ever tell you anything, Anne?”

Anne turned her face farther away. She was very white. Her round young limbs were trembling. “Why don't you go into the house and ask her?” she said, with sweet, shrill incisiveness. “I should say that was the quickest way.”

“She'll run if she sees me coming. She doesn't act as if she wanted me to. Oh, Anne, don't you know anything about it?”

“No, I don't know a thing.”

“You knew we used to go together some, years ago?”

“No, I didn't.”

“We weren't engaged, but it was sort of understood, I'd always thought. It was before I went to California. Father'd lost his money, and mother was sick, and I thought I'd got to stir around and do something before I said much about getting married.

“We wrote to each other quite a while. Then I got kind of discouraged. I wasn't doing very well, and I didn't see as I was ever coming home. I had to send every dollar I could save to father, and I began to think I couldn't get married till I was an old man, and I didn't know but it was sort of silly to say anything about it.

“I dare say my letters showed how I felt. Anyhow, she didn't write quite so often, and then I heard she'd got a beau. That settled me. I should have been home three years ago if I hadn't supposed she was married. I didn't have the courage to ask. I did make up my mind to write and ask mother, though, finally. I thought I could bear it, and might as well know.

“When I found out she wasn't, I came straight here. But she acted so cold and offish the first time I saw her that I thought sure she'd got over thinking anything of me. But once in a while she'd seem a little different, and I couldn't tell. Anne, didn't you ever hear her say anything about me? Sometimes I think I'm a fool to expect she'd remember anything so long ago. I wish I could see her just a minute. I'd like to tell her why I stopped writing, anyhow, though I never supposed she cared much. Her letters had begun to sound rather cool.”

“I'll go in and tell Clarissa that you want to speak to her,” said Anne. “I don't see any need of so much fuss.” Her voice sounded sweet and crisp. She swung her blue muslin

skirts between the rose-bushes with an air. Her yellow head was proudly erect.

“She looks just the way Clarissa used to,” Gilman thought, as he stared after her.

Presently she reappeared at the entrance of the garden walk. “Go right in,” she called out. Then she went around to the front of the house. “They’ll see I ain’t shut up in my room, crying,” she thought to herself.

She sauntered about among the bushes, pulling roses here and there. She heard voices behind the parlor blinds. Her face was still pale, but her mouth began to tremble a little at the corners. Anne had a sweet nature. “It’s a great joke on me,” she whispered to herself. Then she laughed, with the most unselfish amusement, in the midst of her girlish chagrin and sorrow.

There was a bush of beautiful pink roses down by the gate. Anne stood there picking them when her friend, Ellen Pierson, came down the road, and stopped, leaning her slender elbows on the gate. “What are you picking so many roses for?” asked she.

“I don’t know but I shall go to filling up jars with them, like Clarissa,” said Anne.

FRASCATI'S

from: The Project Gutenberg EBook of Leda, by Aldous Huxley

BUBBLE-BREASTED swells the dome
Of this my spiritual home,
From whose nave the chandelier,
Schaffhausen frozen, tumbles sheer.
We in the round balcony sit,
Lean o'er and look into the pit
Where feed the human bears beneath,
Champing with their gilded teeth.
What negroid holiday makes free
With such priapic revelry?
What songs? What gongs? What nameless rites?
What gods like wooden stalagmites?
What steam of blood or kidney pie?
What blasts of Bantu melody?
Ragtime. . . . But when the wearied Band
Swoons to a waltz, I take her hand.
And there we sit in blissful calm,
Quietly sweating palm to palm.

FROM BOMBAY TO BAGHDAD.

From: The Project Gutenberg eBook, *A Woman's Journey Round the World*, by Ida Pfeiffer

DEPARTURE FROM BOMBAY--SMALL-POX--MUSCAT--BANDR-ABAS--THE PERSIANS--
THE KISHMA STRAITS--BUSCHIR--ENTRANCE INTO THE SCHATEL-ARAB--
BASSORA--ENTRANCE INTO THE TIGRIS--BEDOUIN TRIBES--CTESIPHON AND
SELEUCIA--ARRIVAL AT BAGHDAD.

The steamer "Sir Charles Forbes" (forty horse-power, Captain Lichfield) had only two cabins, a small and a large one. The former had already been engaged for some time by an Englishman, Mr. Ross; the latter was bespoken by some rich Persians for their wives and children. I was, therefore, obliged to content myself with a place upon deck; however, I took my meals at the captain's table, who showed me the most extreme attention and kindness during the whole voyage.

The little vessel was, in the fullest sense of the word, overloaded with people; the crew alone numbered forty-five; in addition to that there were 124 passengers, chiefly Persians, Mahomedans, and Arabs. Mr. Ross and myself were the only Europeans. When this crowd of persons were collected, there was not the smallest clear space on the deck; to get from one place to another it was necessary to climb over innumerable chests and boxes, and at the same time to use great caution not to tread upon the heads or feet of the people.

In such critical circumstances I looked about immediately to see where I could possibly secure a good place. I found what I sought, and was the most fortunate of all the passengers, more so than even Mr. Ross, who could not sleep any night in his cabin on account of the heat and insects. My eye fell upon the under part of the captain's dinner-table, which was fixed upon the stern deck; I took possession of this place, threw my mantle round me, so that I had a pretty secure position, and no cause to fear that I should have my hands, feet, or indeed my head trodden upon.

I was somewhat unwell when I left Bombay, and on the second day of the voyage a slight attack of bilious fever came on. I had to contend with this for five days. I crept painfully from my asylum at meal times to make way for the feet of the people at table. I did not take any medicine (I carried none with me), but trusted to Providence and my good constitution.

A much more dangerous malady than mine was discovered on board on the third day of the voyage. The small-pox was in the large cabin.

Eighteen women and seven children were crammed in there. They had much less room than the negroes in a slave-ship; the air was in the highest degree infected, and they were not allowed to go on the deck, filled as it was with men; even we deck passengers were in great anxiety lest the bad air might spread itself over the whole ship through the opened windows. The disease had already broken out on the children before they were brought on board; but no one could suspect it, as the women came late at night, thickly veiled, and enveloped in large mantles, under which they carried the children. It was only on the third day, when one of the children died, that we discovered our danger.

The child was wrapped in a white cloth, fastened upon a plank, which was weighted by some pieces of coal or stone, and lowered into the sea. At the moment that it touched the water, the waves closed over it, and it was lost to our sight.

I do not know whether a relation was present at this sad event; I saw no tears flow. The poor mother might, indeed, have sorrowed, but she dare not accompany her child; custom forbade it.

Two more deaths occurred, the other invalids recovered, and the contagion happily did not spread any further.

30th April. Today we approached very near to the Arabian coast, where we saw a chain of mountains which were barren and by no means attractive. On the following morning (1st of May) small forts and watch-towers made their appearance, here and there, upon the peaks of beautiful groups of rock, and presently, also, a large one was perceptible upon an extensive mountain at the entrance of a creek.

We came to anchor off the town of Muscat, which lies at the extremity of the creek. This town, which is subject to an Arabian prince, is very strongly fortified, and surrounded by several ranges of extraordinarily formed rocks, all of which are also occupied by forts and towers. The largest of these excites a sad reminiscence: it was formerly a cloister of Portuguese monks, and was attacked by the Arabs one night, who murdered the whole of its inmates. This occurrence took place about two centuries since.

The houses of the town are built of stone, with small windows and terraced roofs. Two houses, distinguished from the others only by their larger dimensions, are the palaces of the mother of the reigning prince, and of the sheikh (governor). Some of the streets are so narrow that two persons can scarcely walk together. The bazaar, according to the Turkish custom, consists of covered passages, under which the merchants sit cross-legged before their miserable stalls.

In the rocky valley in which Muscat lies the heat is very oppressive (124 degrees Fah. in the sun), and the sunlight is very injurious to the eyes, as it is not in the slightest degree softened by any vegetation. Far and wide there are no trees, no shrubs or grass to be seen. Every one who is in any way engaged here, go as soon as their business is finished to their country-houses situated by the open sea. There are no Europeans here; the climate is considered fatal to them.

At the back of the town lies a long rocky valley, in which is a village containing several burial-places, and, wonderful to say, a little garden with six palms, a fig, and a pomegranate-tree. The village is larger and more populous than the town; containing 6,000 inhabitants, while the latter has only 4,000. It is impossible to form any conception of the poverty, filth, and stench in this village; the huts stand nearly one over the other, are very small, and built only of reeds and palm-leaves; every kind of refuse was thrown before the doors. It requires considerable self-denial to pass through such a place, and I wonder that plague, or some other contagion, does not continually rage there. Diseases of the eyes and blindness are, however, very frequent.

From this valley I passed into a second, which contains the greatest curiosity of Muscat, a rather extensive garden, which, with its date-palms, flowers, vegetables, and plantations, constitutes a true picture of an oasis in the desert. The vegetation is only kept up, for the most part, by continual watering. The garden belongs to the Arabian prince. My guide seemed to be very proud of this wonderful garden, and asked me whether there were such beautiful gardens in my country!

The women in Muscat wear a kind of mask of blue stuff over the face, fastened upon springs or wires, which project some distance beyond the face; a hole is cut in the mask between the forehead and nose, which allows something more than the eyes to be seen. These masks are worn by the women only when they are at some distance from home; in and near their houses they are not used. All the women that I saw were very ugly; the men, also, had not the fine, proud features which are so frequently met with among the Arabians. Great numbers of negroes are employed here as slaves.

I made this excursion at the time of the greatest heat (124 degrees Fah. in the sun), and rather weakened by my illness, but did not experience the slightest ill consequences. I had been repeatedly warned that in warm countries the heat of the sun was very injurious to Europeans who were not accustomed to it, and frequently caused fever and sometimes even sun-stroke. If I had attended to every advice, I should not have seen much. I did not allow myself to be led astray--went out in all weathers, and always saw more than my

companions in travel.

On the 2nd of May we again set sail, and on the 3rd of May entered the Persian Sea, and passed very near to the island of Ormus. The mountains there are remarkable for a variegated play of colours; many spots shine as if they were covered with snow. They contain large quantities of salt, and numbers of caravans come annually from Persia and Arabia to procure it. In the evening we reached the small Persian town of Bandr-Abas, off which we anchored.

May 4th. The town is situated on low hills of sand and rocks, which are separated from higher mountains by a small plain. Here also the whole country is barren and wild; solitary groups of palms are found only in the plains.

I looked wistfully towards the land,--I would gladly have visited Persia. The captain, however, advised me not to do so in the dress I wore; because, as he informed me, the Persians were not so good-natured as the Hindoos, and the appearance of a European woman in this remote district was too uncommon an event; I might probably be greeted with a shower of stones.

Fortunately there was a young man on board who was half English and half Persian (his father, an Englishman, had married an Armenian from Teheran), and spoke both languages equally well. I asked him to take me on shore, which he very readily did. He conducted me to the bazaar, and through several streets. The people indeed flocked from all sides and gazed at me, but did not offer me the slightest annoyance.

The houses here are small, and built in the Oriental style, with few windows, and terraced roofs. The streets are narrow, dirty, and seemingly uninhabited; the bazaar only appeared busy. The bakers here prepare their bread in the most simple manner, and, indeed, immediately in the presence of their customers: they knead some meal with water into a dough, in a wooden dish, separate this into small pieces, which they squeeze and draw out with their hands, until they are formed into large thin flakes, which are smeared over with salt water, and stuck into the inner side of a round tube. These tubes are made of clay, are about eighteen inches in diameter, and twenty-two in length; they are sunk one half in the ground, and furnished with an air-draft below. Wood-charcoal is burnt inside the tube at the bottom. The cakes are baked on both sides at once; at the back by the red-hot tube, and in front by the charcoal fire. I had half-a-dozen of such cakes baked--when eaten warm, they are very good.

It is easy to distinguish the Persians from the Arabs, of whom there are many here. The former are larger, and more strongly built;

their skin is whiter, their features coarse and powerful, and their general appearance rude and wild. Their dress resembles that of the Mahomedans. Many wear turbans, others a conical cap of black Astrachan, from a foot to one and a half high.

I was told of so great an act of gratitude of the young man, Mr. William Hebworth, who accompanied me to Bandr-Abas, that I cannot omit to mention it. At the age of sixteen he went from Persia to Bombay, where he met with the kindest reception in the house of a friend of his father's, by whom he was assisted in every way, and even obtained an appointment through his interest. One day his patron, who was married, and the father of four children, had the misfortune to be thrown from his horse, and died from the effects of the fall. Mr. Hebworth made the truly noble resolve of marrying the widow, who was much older than himself, and, instead of property, possessed only her four children, that he might in this way pay the debt of gratitude which he owed to his deceased benefactor.

In Bandr-Abas we hired a pilot to take us through the Straits of Kishma. About noon we sailed.

The passage through these straits is without danger for steamers, but is avoided by sailing vessels, as the space between the island Kishma and the mainland is in parts very narrow, and the ships might be driven on to the shore by contrary winds.

The inland forms an extended plain, and is partially covered with thin underwood. Great numbers of people come from the neighbouring mainland to fetch wood from here.

The captain had spoken very highly of the remarkable beauty of this voyage, the luxuriance of the island, the spots where the sea was so narrow that the tops of the palms growing on the island and mainland touched each other, etc. Since the last voyage of the good captain, a very unfrequent phenomenon would seem to have taken place--the lofty slender palms were transformed into miserable underwood, and, at the narrowest point, the mainland was at least half a mile from the island. Strange to say, Mr. Ross afterwards gave the same description of the place; he believed the captain in preference to his own eyes.

At one of the most considerable contractions stands the handsome fort Luft. Fifteen years since the principal stronghold of the Persian pirates was in this neighbourhood. A severe battle was fought between them and the English, near Luft, in which upwards of 800 were killed, many taken prisoners, and the whole gang broken up. Since that event, perfect security has been restored.

5th May. We left the straits, and three days later came to anchor

off Buschir.

There are considerable quantities of sea-weeds and molluscae in the Persian Gulf; the latter had many fibres, were of a milk-white colour, and resembled a forest agaric in form; others had a glistening rose colour with small yellow spots. Conger eels of two or three feet in length were not uncommon.

8th May. The town of Buschir is situated on a plain six miles from the mountains, whose highest peak, called by the Persians Hormutsch, by the English Halala, is 5,000 feet high.

The town contains 15,000 inhabitants, and has the best harbour in Persia; but its appearance is very dirty and ugly.

The houses stand quite close together, so that it is easy to pass from one to the other over the terraces, and it requires no great exertion to run over the roofs, as the terraces are enclosed only by walls one or two feet high. Upon some houses, square chambers (called wind-catchers), fifteen or twenty feet high, are erected, which can be opened above and at the sides, and serve to intercept the wind and lead it into the apartments.

The women here cover up their faces to such a degree that I cannot imagine how they find their way about. Even the smallest girls imitate this foolish custom. There is also no lack of nose-rings, bracelets, sandals, etc.; but they do not wear nearly so many as the Hindoos. The men are all armed; even in the house they carry daggers or knives, and besides these, pistols in the streets.

We remained two days in Buschir, where I was very well received by Lieutenant Hennelt, the resident.

I would gladly have left the ship here to visit the ruins of Persepolis, and travel by land from thence to Shiraz, Ispahan, Teheran, and so onwards; but serious disturbances had broken out in these districts, and numerous hordes of robbers carried on their depredations. I was in consequence compelled to alter my plan, and to go straight on to Baghdad.

10th May. In the afternoon we left Buschir.

11th May. Today I had the gratification of seeing and sailing on one of the most celebrated rivers in the world, the Schatel-Arab (river of the Arabs), which is formed by the junction of the Euphrates, Tigris, and Kaurun, and whose mouth resembles an arm of the sea. The Schatel-Arab retains its name as far as the delta of the Tigris and Euphrates.

12th May. We left the sea and the mountains behind at the same time, and on both shores immense plains opened before us whose boundaries were lost in the distance.

Twenty miles below Bassora we turned off into the Kaurun to set down some passengers at the little town of Mahambrah, which lies near the entrance of that river. We immediately turned back again, and the captain brought the vessel round in the narrow space in an exceedingly clever way. This proceeding caused the uninitiated some anxiety; we expected every moment to see either the head or stern run a-ground, but it succeeded well beyond all measure. The whole population of the town was assembled on the shore; they had never before seen a steamer, and took the most lively interest in the bold and hazardous enterprise.

About six years ago, the town Mahambrah experienced a terrible catastrophe; it was at that time under Turkish rule, and was surprised and plundered by the Persians; nearly all the inhabitants, amounting to 5,000, were put to death. Since that period it has been retained by the Persians.

Towards noon we arrived at Bassora. Nothing is visible from the river but some fortified works and large forests of date-trees, behind which the town is situated far inland.

The journey from Bombay to this place had occupied eighteen days, in consequence of the unfavourable monsoon, and was one of the most unpleasant voyages which I ever made. Always upon deck in the midst of a dense crowd of people, with a heat which at noon time rose to 99 degrees 5' Fah., even under the shade of a tent. I was only once able to change my linen and dress at Buschir, which was the more annoying as one could not prevent the accumulation of vermin. I longed for a refreshing and purifying bath.

Bassora, one of the largest towns of Mesopotamia, has among its inhabitants only a single European. I had a letter to the English agent, an Armenian named Barseige, whose hospitality I was compelled to claim, as there was no hotel. Captain Lichfield presented my letter to him and made known my request, but the polite man refused to grant it. The good captain offered me accommodation on board his ship, so that I was provided for for the present.

The landing of the Persian women presented a most laughable spectacle: if they had been beauties of the highest order, or princesses from the sultan's harem, there could not have been more care taken to conceal them from the possibility of being seen by men.

I was indebted to my sex for the few glimpses which I caught of them

in the cabin; but among the whole eighteen women I did not see a single good-looking one. Their husbands placed themselves in two rows from the cabin to the ship's ladder, holding large cloths stretched before them, and forming in this way a kind of opaque moveable wall on both sides. Presently the women came out of the cabin; they were so covered with large wrappers that they had to be led as if they were blind. They stood close together between the walls, and waited until the whole were assembled, when the entire party, namely, the moveable wall and the beauties concealed behind it, proceeded step by step. The scrambling over the narrow ship's ladders was truly pitiable; first one stumbled, and then another. The landing occupied more than an hour.

13th May. The captain brought me word that a German missionary was accidentally at Bassora, who had a dwelling with several rooms, and could probably give me shelter. I went to him immediately, and he was so obliging as to provide me with a room in which, at the same time, I found a fireplace. I took leave of the good captain with sincere regret. I shall never forget his friendliness and attentions. He was a truly good-hearted man, and yet the unfortunate crew, mostly Hindoos and negroes, were treated worse on board his ship than I had observed elsewhere. This was the fault of the two mates, who accompanied nearly every word with pushes and blows of the fist. In Muscat three of the poor fellows ran away.

The Christian Europeans excel the pagan Hindoos and Musselmen in learning and science; might they not also at least equal the latter in kindness and humanity?

A small English war-steamer was expected at Bassora in the course of a few days, which carried letters and dispatches between this place and Baghdad, and whose captain was so good as to take European travellers (of whom there are not many that lose themselves here) with him.

I availed myself of the few days of my stay to look about the town, and see what still remains of its ancient celebrity.

Bassora, or Bassra, was founded in the reign of the Caliph Omar, in the year 656. Sometimes under Turkish, sometimes under Persian dominion, it was at last permanently placed under the latter power. There are no vestiges of antiquity remaining; neither ruins of handsome mosques nor caravansaries. The fortified walls are much dilapidated, the houses of the town small and unattractive, the streets crooked, narrow, and dirty. The bazaar, which consists of covered galleries with wretched stalls, cannot show a single good stock of goods, although Bassora is the principal emporium and trading port for the Indian wares imported into Turkey. There are several coffee-stalls and a second-rate caravansary in the bazaar.

A large open space, not very remarkable for cleanliness, serves in the day as a corn-market; and in the evening several hundred guests are to be seen seated before a large coffee-stall, drinking coffee and smoking nargillies.

Modern ruins are abundant in Bassora, the result of the plague which in the year 1832 carried off nearly one half of the inhabitants. Numbers of streets and squares consist only of forsaken and decaying houses. Where, a few years back, men were busily engaged in trade, there is now nothing left but ruins and rubbish and weeds, and palms grow between crumbling walls.

The position of Bassora is said to be particularly unhealthy: the plain surrounding it is intersected at one extremity with numerous ditches filled with mud and filth, which give off noxious exhalations, at the other it is covered with forests of date trees, which hinders the current of air. The heat is so great here, that nearly every house is furnished with an apartment, which lies several feet below the level of the street, and has windows only in the high arches. People live in these rooms during the day.

The inhabitants consist for the most part of Arabs; the rest are Persians, Turks, and Armenians. There are no Europeans. I was advised to wrap myself in a large cloth and wear a veil when I went out; the former I did, but I could not endure the veil in the excessive heat, and went with my face uncovered. The cloth (isar) I carried so clumsily that my European clothes were always visible; nevertheless I was not annoyed by any one.

On the 16th of May, the steamer Nitocris arrived. It was small (forty horse power), but very handsome and clean; the captain, Mr. Johns, declared himself ready to take me, and the first officer, Mr. Holland, gave up his cabin to me. They would not take any compensation either for passage or board.

The journey from Bassora to Baghdad would have been very fatiguing and inconvenient if I had not met with this opportunity. With a boat it would have required forty or fifty days, as the distance is 500 English miles, and the boat must have been for greater part of the distance drawn by men. The distance by land amounts to 390 miles; but the road is through deserts, which are inhabited by nomadic tribes of Bedouins, and over-run with hordes of robbers, whose protection must be purchased at a high price.

17th May. We weighed anchor in the morning at 11 o'clock, and availed ourselves of the current which extends 120 miles up the stream.

In the afternoon we reached the point Korne, also called the Delta

(fifty miles from Bassora). The Tigris and Euphrates join here. Both rivers are equally large, and as it could not, probably, be decided which name should be retained, both were given up, and that of Schatel-Arab adopted.

Many learned writers attempt to give increased importance to this place, by endeavouring to prove by indubitable evidence that the garden of Eden was situated here. If this was the case, our worthy progenitor made a long journey after he was driven out of Paradise, to reach Adam's Peak in Ceylon.

We now entered the Tigris. For a distance of three miles further, we were gratified by the sight of beautiful forests of date-trees, which we had already enjoyed, almost without intermission, from the mouth of the Schatel-Arab; they now suddenly terminated. Both sides of the river were still covered with a rich vegetation, and beautiful orchards, alternated with extended plots of grass, which were partially covered with bushes or shrub-like trees. This fruitfulness, however, is said to extend only a few miles inland: more distant from the river the country is a barren wilderness.

We saw in several places large tribes of Bedouins, who had pitched their tents in long rows, for the most part close to the banks. Some of these hordes had large closely-covered tents; others again had merely a straw mat, a cloth, or some skins stretched on a pair of poles, scarcely protecting the heads of those lying under them from the burning rays of the sun. In winter, when the temperature frequently falls to freezing point, they have the same dwellings and clothing as in summer: the mortality among them is then very great. These people have a wild appearance, and their clothing consists of only a dark-brown mantle. The men have a part of this drawn between the legs, and another part hung round them; the women completely envelop themselves in it; the children very commonly go quite naked until the twelfth year. The colour of their skin is a dark brown, the face slightly tattooed: both the men and women braid their hair into four plaits, which hang down upon the back of the head and temples. The weapons of the men are stout knotted sticks; the women are fond of adorning themselves with glass beads, mussel-shells, and coloured rags; they also wear large nose-rings.

They are all divided into tribes, and are under the dominion of the Porte, to whom they pay tribute; but they acknowledge allegiance only to the sheikh elected by themselves, many of whom have forty or fifty thousand tents under their control. Those tribes who cultivate land have fixed dwellings; the pastoral tribes are nomadic.

Half-way between Bassora and Baghdad, the lofty mountain chain of Luristan becomes visible. When the atmosphere is clear, the

summits, 10,000 feet high, and covered with perpetual snow, may be seen.

Every step in advance leads to the scene of the great deeds of Cambyses, Cyrus, Alexander, etc.: every spot of ground has historical associations. The country is the same; but what has become of its towns and its powerful empires? Ruined walls and heaps of earth and rubbish are the only remains of the most beautiful cities; and where firmly established empires formerly existed, are barren steppes overrun by robber hordes.

The Arabs engaged in agriculture are themselves exposed to the depredations of their nomadic countrymen, especially in harvest time. In order to avoid this evil as much as possible, they bring their crops into small fortified places, of which I observed many between Bassora and Baghdad.

We took in wood several times during the passage, and on these occasions I could approach the inhabitants without fear, as they were inspired with respect for the well-manned and armed vessel. In one instance, I was led far into the underwood in pursuit of some beautiful insects, when I found myself on a sudden surrounded by a swarm of women and children, so that I thought it advisable to hasten back again to the ship's people--not that any one offered me any violence; but they crowded round me, handled my dress, wanted to put on my straw bonnet; and this familiarity was far from pleasant on account of their extreme dirtiness. The children seemed shockingly neglected; many were covered with pimples and small sores; and both great and small had their hands constantly in their hair.

At the places where we stopped they generally brought sheep and butter, both of which were singularly cheap. A sheep cost at the utmost five krans (4s. 6d.). They were very large and fat, with long thick wool, and fat tails of about fifteen inches long and eight inches broad. Our crew had a better diet than I had ever noticed on board any ship. What pleased me even more was the equal good treatment of the natives, who were not in any particular less thought of than the English. I never met with greater order and cleanliness than here--a proof that blows and thumps are not indispensably necessary, as I had so often been assured.

In the districts where the ground was covered with underwood and grass, I saw several herds of wild swine; and there were said to be lions here, who come from the mountains, especially during the winter time, when they carried off cows and sheep: they very seldom attacked men. I was so fortunate as to see a pair of lions, but at such a distance, that I cannot say whether they exceeded in beauty and size those in European menageries. Among the birds, the

pelicans were so polite as to make their respects to us by scraping.

21st May. Today we saw the ruins of the palace of Khuszew Anushirwan at Ctesiphon. Ctesiphon was formerly the capital of the Parthian, and afterwards of the new Persian empire: it was destroyed by the Arabs in the seventeenth century. Nearly opposite, on the right bank of the Tigris, lay Seleucia, one of the most celebrated towns of Babylon, and which, at the time of its prosperity, had a free independent government and a population of 600,000 souls. The chief portion were Greeks.

One obtained two views of Ctesiphon in passing, in consequence of the river winding considerably--almost running back again several miles. I made a trip there from Baghdad, and therefore reserve my account of it.

The old caliphate appears in marvellous magnificence and extent from a distance, but unfortunately loses this on nearer approach. The minarets and cupolas, inlaid with variegated earthenware tiles, glitter in the clear sunlight; palaces, gateways, and fortified works, in endless succession, bound the yellow, muddy Tigris; and gardens, with date and other fruit trees, cover the flat country for miles round.

We had scarcely anchored, when a number of natives surrounded the ship. They made use of very singular vehicles, which resemble round baskets: these are formed of thick palm leaves, and covered with asphalt. They are called "guffer;" are six feet in diameter and three feet in height; are very safe, for they never upset, and may be travelled in over the worst roads. Their invention is very ancient.

I had a letter to the English resident, Major Rawlinson; but as Mr. Holland, the first officer of the ship, offered me the use of his house, I took advantage of this, on account of his being a married man, which Mr. Rawlinson was not. I found Mrs. Holland a very pretty, amiable woman (a native of Baghdad), who, though only three-and-twenty, had already four children, the eldest of whom was eight years old.

